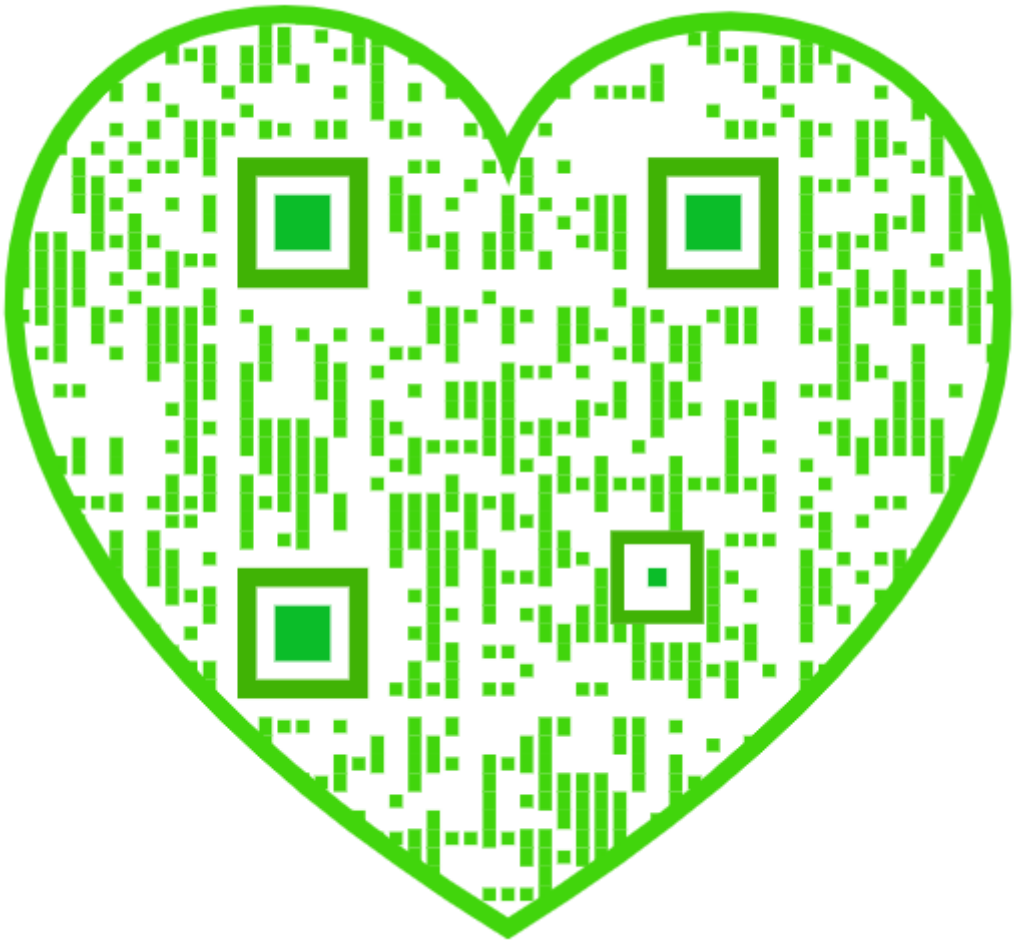
COARSE FISHING

H. T. SHERINGHAM



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"During our recent camp in Connemara we had six tents pitched beside Recess Cottage, Glen Inagh. The weather for the three weeks was appallingly bad, torrents of rain being accompanied by gales which sometimes rose almost to the dimensions of a hurricane, and which on one occasion blew down four of the tents. The staunchest tent of the lot, so far as keeping out the rain, was a small 'A' tent procured for us by Mr. O. G. Williams, and made to his own design. It had no fly sheet, and yet was free even from spraying, the material of which it is made and the angle at the sides no doubt causing this satisfactory result. Most of the other tents had fly-sheets, but these did not keep the inmates entirely dry, as the wind drove the rain so fiercely against the back of the tent that it forced it through the material of which they were composed."—*Irish Cyclist.*

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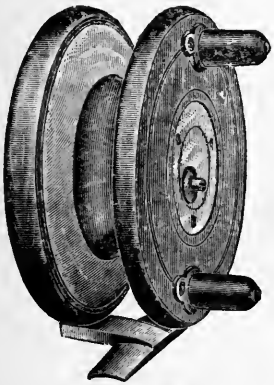

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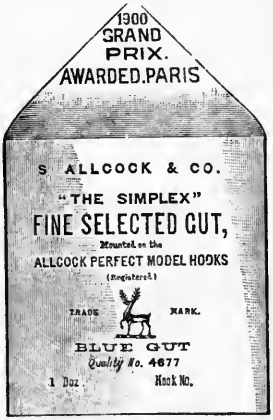

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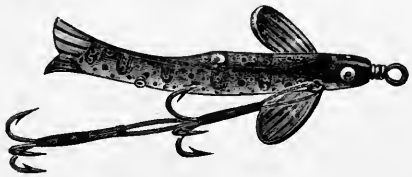

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Two or three passages in this book have previously appeared in *The Field*, and I am indebted to the Editor and Proprietors for permission to republish them here.

Since the bulk of the volume was written, a good deal of discussion has arisen over the Protection of Animals Act, 1911, and its possible effect on the use of live-bait for pike and other fish. While it must be stated that in legal circles some doubt exists as to the interpretation of the paragraphs of the Act which seem to contain an element of danger, it is also to be remarked that, so far, there has been no prosecution of any angler under the Act, while in responsible quarters there seems to be no intention of endeavouring to apply it to a purpose for which it was not designed: its promoters had no intention of interfering with anglers who fish in ordinary sportsman-like ways.

In the event, however, of attempts on the part of irresponsible persons to use the Act as a weapon against the sport, it is well to chronicle the formation of a powerful Anglers' Defence Committee, which is prepared to fight cases and take such steps as may be necessary to preserve the liberty of anglers to follow their pastime as of old, with, of course, due regard to fair and sportsman-like methods.

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COARSE FISHING

PREAMBLE

FRANKLY, I do not see why I should apologize. It is true that Archimedes, my very good friend, is after his kind a prince among anglers. And it is also true that he seemed to think that an apology of some sort would be required before this book would be suffered to appear. But, instead, I will roundly tell Archimedes what is the matter with him. He is too highly specialized. I will grant that he wields his salmon-rod, pitching his fly 30 yards away at every cast, so as to draw tears of envy to my eyes. I will own that he has the power of conjuring trout from the water to an extent that, in old days, would probably have identified him with warlocks and other persons of uneasy reputation. I cannot deny that he busks a fly as very few men can in this degenerate age, or that what he does not know about the art of spinning is scarcely worth knowing. In brief, I admit that he is an angler in a million.

Yet, for all that, he is incomplete. Some part of him is atrophied, and he is but half an angler after all. I, though my salmon-rod's behaviour draws tears of envy from no eye, though my conjuring by the trout stream brings few or no trout out of the water (by comparison with his), though my fly-tying is nought, and my spinning sheer vexation—despite all this, I am more of an angler than he. Should you (being of open mind and unprejudiced) doubt, then, I urge you, take him aside and breathe gently into his ear the word "chub." When he has finished with you—you need not fear actual violence—turn then to Chapter IX. in this volume, and see what I have to say about the same matter. These things done, I will leave it to you in all confidence to pronounce which of us twain is the more (I do not say, *better :* that is not the question) an angler.

I am at times a little out of patience with this specialization. It tends to produce that terrifying creature, the Superior Person. It is he who now bestrides our streams like a Colossus. Now and again I catch myself wondering, for very fear of him, whether I ought not to take off the spinning-flight and the 6-inch dace, and try for yonder pike with a medium olive quill (00 hook) instead. And then comes the still more disturbing thought, Is it permissible to try for yonder pike at all? Is a pike, strictly speaking, a fish? As for chub ——

To such a pass may the Superior Person bring a mind

in these days of refinement. It is all very bad. Luckily, however, though increasing in number, he is not yet common enough to give us more than momentary qualms. He cannot seriously affect the practice of the majority, and we are still able to say that fishing is the art of catching fish, and not only the art of deluding a 3-pound trout with a dry fly, or of struggling with a 15-pound salmon in a roaring spring torrent. The part is not yet greater than the whole, thank goodness, and angling is still the delightful medley of sensations that it was when Walton took his eager way that fine fresh morning up Tottenham Hill.

Salmon-fishing is good; trout-fishing is good; but to the complete angler neither is intrinsically better than the pursuit of roach, or tench, or perch, or pike. There are moods and seasons, of course. Comes April, and desire is off to the valleys between the mountains, where streams are boisterous and little trout leap in the foam; where the wind comes sparkling off the moors, and a man feels a new life stirring within him. But in July, when the world croons the summer song of heat and light and slumbrous days, it is to the deep, slow river with its cool wealth of shade, and the solemn music of the weir, that we wander for refreshment, there to watch a daintily poised float, or to cozen old loggerhead out of his fastness of lily-pads with an artificial bumblebee.

In truth, the matter needs no long argument. To the angler the world offers all manner of joys, and it cannot be said that some are better or some worse—rather that they are different. The man richest in them is the man who disdains no kind of fishing, but takes what chances of sport opportunity throws in his way. Some need there is for him to attune his mind to the keynote of the moment, some need to appreciate the niceties by which apparently very small beer can be transformed into sound old October. The artifice of fishing is displayed not only in the delusion of the fish, but to some extent in the delusion of the fisher also. Let him but have the power of persuading himself that the boy in him has never grown up, or, better, let it be so without his knowing it, and the world is his oyster. Childhood says, "Let's pretend," and forthwith finds itself in a magic land where everything is as it should be, and where the words "I wish" control the scheme of being. The consciousness of "pretending" is soon lost in the exhilaration of achievement, and what was unreal at first becomes reality. Perhaps this dream-world *is* real. Who shall say that it is not? If "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," where is the real to be found?

But I wander too far. I do not propose that the angler should pretend altogether, but rather that he should borrow some of childhood's earnestness, and see things in their right proportions. If he angles in the

Puddle where roach are small and catches a pounder, let him not straightway remind himself how, in the Avon last September, he caught one of 2 pounds 2 ounces, and then fall to abusing the present hour and place. He must rather forget all about the Avon, concentrate his thoughts on the Puddle, and *realize* how lucky he is to have taken a pounder from its niggardly waters. If he can do this without difficulty, he is capable of extracting from the sport of fishing all the pleasure that it has to offer.

Fifty years ago this long preamble to a book about coarse fishing and the art of catching them would not have been needed. A hundred years ago it would have been an impertinence. But now a good many anglers do seem to need a reminder that trout and salmon are not the only fish worthy of their attention, and that by concentrating their efforts on those twain they wilfully miss a great deal. Trout and salmon are not always or everywhere to be had, and they are expensive luxuries. Hence, you may often hear bitter lamentation from men whose fishing holidays have brought them little but disappointment. Coarse fish, on the other hand, are still reasonably plentiful and accessible, and are more certain to yield some result for the angler's trouble and outlay. A holiday spent in pursuit of them is sure to provide some exciting hours. It is hardly conceivable that a keen fisherman should spend a month on a coarse-fish river without laying some

golden memories in store. But the salmon-fisher may well return home after four melancholy weeks in which he has not stirred, and has scarcely seen, a fish. "Probatum est," as "The Secrets of Angling" says about that obscure unguent, oil of ivy.

This book tries, then, to do justice to the pleasures of coarse-fishing. It is intended to be practical, but at least as much so with regard to mind as to method. There are plenty of admirable textbooks in existence which teach all that is required about the ways of catching fish, so it is not necessary for me to be over-minute as to tackle and baits and the elementary things. But there is, I think, room for a book which, while not wholly neglecting axioms, tries to show the pleasure that is innate in the different modes of fishing, and to emphasize the variety of the emotions that are called forth by apparently very small things.

With regard to actual methods, it will, perhaps, be noticed that I lay special stress on some forms of angling which are not widely practised. This may be accounted for by the fact that I can speak confidently of their pleasure and utility from personal experience. The beaten track has its ease and charm, but there are times when one loves to wander along the by-paths, and to cull the flowers of quite different sensation that may there be found.

It has been said that trout-fishing is the most varied kind of sport that there is, and so far as the pursuit

of one particular species of quarry is concerned, I think this is true. But it is not less true that coarse fishing in the mass holds at least ten times the variety of interest. There are many species of coarse fish, and each one offers the angler a set of problems for solution peculiar to itself. Most of these fish can be sought in several different ways, and though no single one equals the trout in variety, together they far surpass him. A man who is expert at catching them all by the most appropriate devices is never likely to be bored by too much sameness.

There is really work for a lifetime in learning all about coarse fishing, and should there be now any men fortunate enough to be able to echo the dignified words of Thomas Tod Stoddart, on the famous occasion when he was asked what his occupation was—"Man, I'm an angler!"—they need not fear that they are devoting more time to the business than it needs. You cannot master the many details in odd days and occasional periods of holiday, as I fear this book all too clearly shows by its deficiencies. But you can get a smattering of knowledge thus and a vast amount of pleasure. If the book shows that too, it achieves as much as I dare to hope.

CHAPTER I

A MATTER FOR THE COOK

Considering how abominably we English folk cook, I marvel that we should think so much about cooking. Fresh-water fish, other than trout, char, and grayling, have to a great extent been condemned by this; and, candidly, when we reflect how truly nauseous a mess the ordinary English cook is able to compose with, let me say, a roach and her apparatus, it is difficult to feel surprise if the said roach becomes a byword and a scandal in the household for ever after, and if the order goes forth that roach are in future to be given away.

Beyond some slight knack in egg-boiling, I make no claim to skill in cooking, so it is not for me to attempt to teach the cook her business; but I am possessed of a certain amount of evidence that coarse fish are by no means to be despised as articles of food. I well remember an occasion when three of us who were fishing the Kennet, near Kintbury, made a discovery which surprised our simple minds. The river in that district contains very large dace, and we used to catch

plenty of about ¾ pound when we were fishing for trout or grayling. One day in, I think, August we decided to test their edible properties, and accordingly we had one served for breakfast in company with a trout and a grayling, each of about 1¼ pounds, which is as good a size for eating as need be. A solemn trial of the three took place, each man taking a portion of each fish. The unanimous verdict was that the dace was the best and the trout the worst!

On another occasion, years ago, I was staying at the little fishing inn at Holywell Ferry, on the well-beloved Ouse, and there learned of the possibilities of another fish. It was served at breakfast in a filleted condition, and I remember asking for more without knowing what it was. It proved to be bream. I remember that fish, partly for its excellent savour, but partly also because a fellow-angler, when fishing for chub the day before, had caught it on a fly, a very unusual circumstance. Could I be sure of getting bream always to taste as that one did, I would ask of Fate no better viand.

How the topic brings back thoughts of past breakfasts! It was that good old angler, Basil Field, who converted me to the eel, and well do I remember the amusement on his face as the repugnance on mine gave way to an expression of sheer greed. In truth, your Test eel, cut into pieces and subtly fried in egg and breadcrumbs, is the choicest possible food—a little rich, they say, but fit for Lucullus himself. *Eheu fugaces!*

—what vast numbers of eels I have given away in the past under the impression that I did not like them!

Roach and chub are chiefly connected in my mind with a tempting odour wafted from the frying-pan on shore to expectant noses just above water. It may be that, fresh from the early morning swim, we were not over-particular on those camping expeditions. Certain it is that we ate those two discredited fish with appetite. But porridge preceded them, and, in times of plenty, bacon followed, so perhaps roach and chub were not so important as they seem in retrospect. I am sure of one thing, though: no fish that smelt so good in cooking could have been wholly worthless. Moreover, I have a friend who is at once a very expert roach-fisher and something of an epicure, and he tells me that he knows no better dish than a plump Thames roach in winter, when the condition of these fish is at the best. Nor does he confine himself to precept: he eats of his own catch. Nothing could be more convincing.

Of perch, caught in a brisk, clean river, I cannot speak too highly. To my mind a pound of such perch is worth several pounds of trout, and is equal to a pound of any sea fish that I know. Firm in consistency, the flesh is most delicate in flavour. Sometimes I meet people who have never eaten river perch, and condemn the species on account of experiments with the stunted specimens that they caught from ponds when they were boys. I do not try to undeceive them,

because I know full well that our stock of perch is already lamentably insufficient. We do not want gastronomic raids to be made on those that still remain to us. The converted persons would, I fear, eschew the uncertain method of rod and line and take nets.

As to pike, there is a theory that only the smaller specimens are good eating. It is quite mistaken according to my experience. I have partaken of pike weighing up to 19 pounds, and believe that fish over 10 pounds are every bit as good as 5-pounders. But a noted pike angler once told me that it is not wise to eat these big fish too soon after capture, and that they should be cleaned and kept for a day or two. This may be done very well, since big pike are generally caught in the cold months.

I have no memory of eating tench or barbel, but the first is said to be good, and for the second perhaps the Thames waterman's verdict may be accepted as sound : "If you had to eat a bit of streaky bacon day in and day out, I believe *you'd* fancy a bit of barbel for a change." But somehow barbel have not an appetizing appearance to my thinking. To gudgeon fried in breadcrumbs I feel only a moderate inclination, but possibly I have not tasted very good specimens. They have an excellent reputation.

With the best will in the world, I can say nothing good of carp. Two awful experiments have I made, and two only. The first was a pious effort to follow

in the footsteps of Walton, and, so far as circumstances and place (a then remote corner of Wales) permitted, his prescription was observed: "Sweet marjoram, thyme, and parsley, of each half a handful, a sprig of rosemary, and another of savory, bind them into two or three small bundles, and put them to your carp, with four or five whole onions, twenty pickled oysters, and three anchovies. Then pour upon your carp as much claret wine as will only cover him; and season your claret well with salt, cloves and mace, and the rinds of oranges and lemons: that done, cover your pot and set it on a quick fire, till it be sufficiently boiled; then take out the carp, and lay it with the broth into the dish, and pour upon it a quarter of a pound of the best fresh butter, melted and beaten with half a dozen spoonfuls of the broth, the yolks of two or three eggs, and some of the herbs shred; garnish your dish with lemons, and so serve it up, and much good do you."

It may be that, lacking the pickled oysters, we lacked the essential thing in this recipe; but it is a fact that, though all things were done as nearly as possible in accordance with what has been here set down, the carp, or, rather, carps (there were two, if I remember rightly, about 3 pounds each), were "so curious a dish of meat" that I am sure none of the company who yet live will have forgotten them. Prodigious! I have ever since been firmly of opinion that

a glass case is much better suited to a carp than is a dish. The other experiment did nothing to shake this belief. It was in Germany, and a kindly hostess provided the dish in my special honour, that I might appreciate German carp served in the Christmas manner. There was a thick brown sauce and—but, obviously, I can say no more.

It is, of course, natural that a sea-girt isle like ours, having abundance of fresh sea fish at command, having also experience that fresh sea fish are mostly edible even when primitive cooking has done its worst for them, will not readily give itself the trouble of studying and understanding fresh-water fish, which do not give such easy satisfaction. But it was not always so. The pages of Walton himself display a genuine appreciation of food which is now despised, and, what is more, a determination to make the best of it. The recipe for carp-dressing bespeaks a mind resolute to overcome all obstacles such as a natural flavour of mud. Nor is Walton alone in this. The earliest English authority (we call him Dame Julyana Berners, for sentimental reasons chiefly) has an eye on the kitchen throughout his quaint pages. And other ancients are no less emphatic. One, indeed, the delightful Thomas Barker, was quite as much a cook as a fisherman—and he was a good fisherman. Speaking as a layman, I should say that his recipes would be worth trying to-day.

Some people call it "mud"; others, more tactful,

speak of it as "the fresh-water taste." This is, I take it, the chief defect in coarse fish, as it is in many trout; but I cannot think it irremediable. Salt, vinegar, mustard sauce—surely culinary science can devise arts to remove a flavour which is too pronounced. Bones, again—it is obviously but a question of taking pains and paying some attention to the anatomy of fishes. If you plunge recklessly into the eating of even so popular a fish as the whiting you are going to have trouble. It is scarcely worse with coarse fish, and if their flavour equalled that of the whiting, I do not doubt that they would receive an equal amount of anxious care.

What I feel almost convinced of is that this flavour at one time *did* equal that of the vaunted fishes of the sea. It is not reasonable to suppose that our ancestors were wholly devoid of discrimination, or that they liked the savour of mud any better than we do. My interpretation of the riddle is that they knew how to cook fresh-water fish, and that their descendants do not, though tradition lingers here and there in country districts, and possibly among the Jews, who still retain a praiseworthy fondness for fish of lake and river. It would be a pious and worthy deed if someone learned both in fishing and cooking would make solemn trial of the recipes to be found in the older fishing books, and also gather up such threads of traditional practice as are still in actual existence. It might prove that

the work was of more than academic value. In the past fresh-water fish have undoubtedly been esteemed as a means of food-supply—witness not only old books, but also the invariable site of monasteries near pools or rivers, and the fish-stews that are a part of the domain of so many old country houses.

This being so, there is no logical reason why the economic worth of coarse fish should not be recognized once more, always provided that they can be re-established on the larder shelf. This is purely a matter for the cook, and there I must leave it.

There is, however, another reason for the lessened popularity of coarse fish which should be touched on. This is the increased distribution of the trout and his relations. Fifty years ago there was much less water devoted to trout than there is now, and it follows that there is much less water left to coarse fish now than there was fifty years ago. I do not say that this is altogether a bad thing, since trout must always be more esteemed than the others; but I do think that there is danger of the change being overdone. It always grieves me when I hear of a fine coarse-fish lake being drained and emptied so that it may be converted into a trout water. Very occasionally the results may be good enough to justify the policy. More often, I fancy, it turns out that a fine possession has been removed in favour of something very indifferent. There must be, I should say, a real satisfaction in being the

owner of a historic lake full of huge pike and monstrous carp. It seems so *ancient* a possession. It would tempt one to say that one's greatest grandfather brought the carp over with him, packed in damp moss, when he rode at the right hand of William the Norman, and, to his pleased surprise, found the pike (*des brochets magnifiques*) waiting for him in the mere when he duly evicted the Saxon and took possession of his new abode. Judging from things I have read about fishes in popular journals of late, I should say that there is quite a chance of this story being believed.

Norman ancestry apart, however, a fine old coarse-fish lake is a choice thing. It is not to be made in a year or in many years, whereas ten years will give you as good a head of trout in a lake as ever you are likely to get. A coarse-fish preserve is a thing of much slower growth. Probably Nature finds it a harder matter to adjust her balance when she has to deal with several kinds of fish than with one; certainly she takes longer about it.

In some cases, I expect, owners of lakes have been impelled to turn out the coarse fish and stock with trout because they have found that the fishing had deteriorated, and that the big pike, perch, tench, bream, etc., of old days were no longer forthcoming. The reason for this deterioration is simple enough—deterioration in the lake itself. In course of long years, decaying vegetation both of the water and of the land—such as

the autumnal fall of leaves—covers the bottom with a deposit of evil-smelling mud, and if it continues unchecked, this will in time fill up all the shallows, and eventually the deeps too. The lake will end as a mere swamp, quite useless for fish. This process may be seen going on in some of the Norfolk Broads, if illustration on a large scale be needed. But there are few private lakes in which it may not be observed too. More than once a landowner has told me that his lake was 10 or 12 feet deep in the deepest part "just there," and fishing has afterwards shown me that the depth was not anywhere more than 5 or 6 feet. Of course, the lake *used to be* 10 or 12 feet deep, years ago. People who live on the spot are slow sometimes to mark gradual changes of that kind.

Mudding a lake is, unhappily, a very big and costly business, but if the fishing is to keep up its excellence it ought to be done periodically. Coarse fish are not nearly so impatient of a foul bottom as trout, but most of them feel it none the less; all of them feel the decrease in the volume of water which it brings about. The result is seen in their decreased general size at first, and later probably in a severe attack of disease, which kills them wholesale. I believe that the easiest and best way of keeping a lake in condition would be to do the mudding and weed-cutting pretty frequently, a little at a time, much as is done on well-managed trout streams. The expense would, of course, be much the

same in the long-run, but it would not *seem* so much. The accumulated work necessitated by half a century or more of neglect smites even a rich man a shrewd blow on his pocket.

I fear that the circumstances of our time are combining to destroy the old country life, the old country customs, and the old country sport. Some of us nowadays run a race neck and neck with—I scarcely know what—death perhaps; what else should make us run so fast? At any rate, we do run, and in our running leave behind many worthy things, such as the pleasure of an evening's float-fishing for the striped perch that used to cruise round the piles of the boat-house. I question whether the substitution of an evening with rainbow-trout, which all disappeared in the winter, is any real improvement. Of course, if they did not all disappear—well, there is always something to be said on both sides.

At any rate, if only we could find out how to cook coarse fish again, it would be a step in the right direction, and I believe it would do more to help them back to their old place of honour than anything.

CHAPTER II

GEAR

The question of equipment is one which every right-minded fishing author has to consider at some time or other, and in greater or less degree. In a book of wide scope, such as this, it is not easy to know when and where the consideration should have its place. If we plunge madly into a tackle-shop with minds completely innocent of all that pertains to the art of fishing, we also plunge into confusion. If, on the other hand, we set out to fish without having plunged into a tackle-shop—well, we can set out, but we cannot fish. Some sort of gear is necessary to the most humble beginning.

The only satisfactory way of coping with the difficulty seems to me to proceed from the general to the particular—to discuss the subject of tackle in its broadest aspects here and now, and in later chapters to deal with minutiæ as may be necessary. There are so many fish in our waters, and the varied methods of catching them involve so many small requirements, that the beginner, confronted with everything all at once,

would, I think, be liable to some disorder of the brain. The more insidious process of building his knowledge up gradually will at any rate save him from that.

Considered broadly, the question of equipment seems a simple enough thing. You want something to approach the fish with—that is to, say a rod and line; something to tempt them with—that is to say, a bait; something to attach them to the line—that is to say, a hook; something which will help you to get them out of the water—that is to say, a landing-net; and, finally, something in which you can carry them home. Our forefathers had a short way of providing these things. The rod cut from the nearest spinney, the line plucked from the tail of the nearest stallion, the bait dug from the soil or gathered from the herbage, the hook fashioned crudely by amateur smithery, the net constructed in the home—this apparatus involved a little trouble, but practically no expense.

I suppose we could do all this now and still get some sport, but for my own part I frankly confess that I like modern conveniences, and I like varnish, enamel, and the other superficial attractions of the age which you will find in the tackle-shop. Were one absolutely put to it, probably one could fashion most things for oneself in a very rough way; but they would not look nice, nor would they be nearly so efficient as what one can buy. There are moments when the call of the past is very insistent, and I have

often longed to have a day's fishing in the seventeenth century, when fishers were comparatively few and fishes correspondingly complaisant. But in dreaming of such a possibility I have never contemplated being without twentieth-century paraphernalia. Walton had no reel, and I should certainly not be happy nowadays without a reel. And I have grave doubts whether his pockets were nearly so efficient as my pockets. Pockets, indeed, are one of our triumphs in this later age. They inspire me to the preliminary thought that the angler's first requirement is a fishing-coat with many and very large pockets. Mine has eight—two of them being huge "poacher's pockets" in the lining of the skirt. I do not find eight at all too many.

But, of course, a fishing-coat is not the first necessary of a fishing career. The rod is the first essential thing, and must first receive consideration.

For all-round fishing you *must* have three rods, and you *may* have thirty. Probably you will begin with three, and as the spirit of the thing catches you, you will very soon find yourself progressing towards the larger number. The collecting instinct has a good deal to do with some of the masses of tackle that adorn anglers' studies, and vex the souls of fair women, who like "a place for everything, and everything in its place." Unfortunately, there can scarcely be a place for everything that a hardened old angler possesses—at least, not what a woman considers a place. As I write

I look at the lowest shelf over my fireplace, and I see upon it, besides the ordinary furniture for smoking, a reel, a coil of wire, a box of swivels, a box of leads, an oil-bottle, a little tin of varnish, a spring balance, a fishing-knife, and some of those india-rubber rings which are so useful for many fishing purposes. On the next shelf, I am glad to say, there is little but ornaments, but I suppose it *does* look a little odd for two Japanese vases to be wearing each a collar of oil-dressed silk line. It is good for those lines to be hanging there and getting nicely dry, but I have more than once been told that their place is elsewhere. So, too, with three or four top joints which lie on the third shelf. I do not myself quite know why they are there, or even of what rods they are a part, but they have been there a long time, and disturbing them now would be a serious matter.

This digression, as most digressions, had no business to be, but it is perhaps illustrative in a poor way of what happens when you have got past the three-rod stage and are become a collector. It has also, accidentally but with some subtlety, emphasized my previous contention that the topic of tackle is complicated and, to the novice, overwhelming, in anything but small doses. Let me now return to rods.

First, there must be a rod for the simplest kind of fishing—simplest, I mean, in conception, though not necessarily in practice—that is, float-fishing; next,

there must be a pike-rod, for pike are fished for in ways which demand special equipment; and third, there must be a fly-rod. The possibility of fly-fishing for coarse fish is by no means to be overlooked, and you can use the fly-rod in other ways with great contentment.

For rod the first I counsel a weapon which will continue to have your affection and esteem after you have got out of the three-rod stage, and have begun to realize that different fish and different rivers are best approached with different kinds of rod, or perhaps I should say, lengths of rod. Your first venture will not always meet all your needs, but it should be of such a type that it will always meet *some* of your needs.

Its length should be somewhere between 11 and 14 feet; its material should be light cane for the lower joints and greenheart for the top. It should be in three joints (four, perhaps, is more usual if it is 14 feet long), and it should not weigh much more than an ounce to the foot. It should be decidedly stiff and yet have plenty of spring in the top, for the better conservation of fine tackle when a heavy fish is being played. To test a rod in a shop, and to find out whether it suits your hand, put it together and fix a 3½-inch wooden reel on the butt. No true idea of a rod's balance or action can be gained unless a suitable reel has been put on to it—except, of course, in the case of what is called a "roach-pole," about which I shall have some things to say later. Enough at this present

to mention that the proper roach-pole is a reelless rod, and that for ordinary fishing a reel is an essential.

Rod up and reel on, grasp the butt 8 or 10 inches above the reel, and see how the combination suits you. The lower part of the butt should be supported under the forearm, thus:

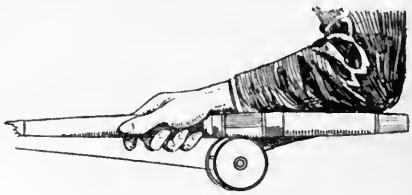

Fig. 1.

This mode of holding the rod is not essential, and there are even times when it is not an advantage; but normally it saves fatigue, and is natural and easy. So held, the rod should feel quite light in the hand, and should give the impression of being manageable—that is to say, you should have no doubts about your ability to put its point wherever you want it—up, down, to right, to left, as the case may be, and, moreover, to do any of these things quickly and as often as you desire. You should feel hardly more diffidence about handling a well-balanced rod than about handling a familiar walking-stick. To some people this may sound rather absurd, because in light-hearted moments one does all sorts of things with a walking-stick, such as making motions of fence, smiting imaginary golf-balls, play-

ing invisible yorkers, decapitating luxuriant nettles, and so on.

It is never necessary to do these things with a fishing-rod. (It is true that I have seen nettles and other herbage smitten with a rod, but I did not regard the proceeding as either necessary or wise. It was a pure luxury, the indulgence of a somewhat pampered temper.) But for all that, it is well to have a feeling that you *could* do them, in reason, if you had a mind. It shows that the rod suits you, and that you are its master. Emergencies often arise in fishing when the power to handle your rod quickly and surely saves you from disaster. If you are never quite sure what the point of the rod is going to do when you move your hand, you are going to have many troubles. This matter is most important in the more violent forms of fishing, such as casting a fly or spinning, but it is by no means to be overlooked in float-fishing.

Another useful test of a rod's balance in relation to the reel is to balance it on your finger, thus:

Fig. 2.

If the point of balance is about 18 inches from the end of the butt in, say, a 13-foot rod, all is well, and

you may safely buy rod and reel too, other things being to your liking.

The rod I have in my mind need not be expensive as rods go. Except that a guinea rod is better finished and more choicely varnished than a half-guinea rod, and therefore may last longer, I do not see that it has much superiority. One of my favourite rods, now some fifteen years old, cost me six shillings and sixpence. It is 12 feet 3 inches in length and weighs 15½ ounces. Another, 14 feet (15 ounces), cost eight shillings and sixpence about seven years ago. Another, 11 feet 9 inches (9½ ounces), cost seven shillings and sixpence but a few months ago. The older friends have caught many fish and have been sadly ill-used, but are good for plenty more work. The newest one looks like lasting for ever, unless I tread on it. The novice, by the way, should learn not to tread on his rod; the advice sounds superfluous, but is not.

In the diagram is shown the bend taken by the 12-foot 3-inch rod, which I regard as a rather powerful all-round weapon, in lifting a weight of ¼ pound. This will give some idea of its action. If you have a rod of the same length and weight which takes the same curve in lifting the same weight, you may be sure that the rod is able to cope with big chub, tench, bream, or even carp.

In the same diagram is to be seen the curve taken by my pike-rod in lifting a ½-pound weight. The rod

A. Curve taken by 12-foot 3-inch general rod (15½ ounces) in lifting 4 ounces.
B. Curve taken by 11-foot pike-rod (21½ ounces) in lifting 8 ounces.
C. Curve taken by 10-foot 3-inch fly-rod (7 ounces 2 drachms) in lifting 3 ounces.

is 11 feet long and weighs 21½ ounces. It is so admirable a rod that it moves me to sing the praises of split-cane as a material for pike-rods. Good split-cane gives you no anxiety. It is very unlikely to break, even in casting a heavy bait a long way; it responds gallantly to a demand for extra exertion; it is brisk in striking and playing a fish; and it never gets warped, with fair treatment, until years of hard work have entitled it to retirement. But I must add that, if expense be a consideration, it has not the advantages of greenheart, or whole-cane and greenheart, the other materials commonly employed for pike-rods. A good greenheart rod costs about half as much as a good split-cane; a good whole-cane rod with a greenheart top costs rather less than a rod all of greenheart.

With ordinary care, either greenheart or whole-cane will do all that you want, so a beginner need not be afraid of the materials. Certainly at first he is not likely to be over-violent with them. It is the old hand, rather proud of his ability to cast a long way, who breaks a rod through being too strenuous. I have broken both greenheart and whole-cane rods in casting, and consequently feel safer with split-cane, which breaks very rarely indeed.

If you do choose a rod of the other two materials, it might be wise to have one rather heavier in build than the split-cane I have described. My rod will cast a bait of 2 ounces without being overtasked, but split-cane is,

I think, stronger and more durable than the other materials. An exact copy of my rod in greenheart would do the same work very well for a time, but would ultimately get warped by the strain of it, and therefore for all-round pike-fishing a more powerful rod would be found to last longer. With whole-cane the case for power is even stronger.

Whatever type of rod you choose, see that it has what is called a "cork-grip"—that is, a covering of cork for the handle above and below the reel. Pike-fishing is a winter pastime chiefly, and it makes the hands very cold at times. Cork is decidedly less numbing to the touch than varnished wood. I think, too, that a cork-grip gives a rod more "life," makes it more responsive to one's handling, but that may be because it is slightly elastic.

I said nothing about the rings on the first rod, because for a bottom-fishing rod it does not much matter what ring you have so long as there are rings, and because what are called "snake-rings" are an efficient and satisfactory feature of most modern rods now. But for a pike-rod the nature of the rings is of some importance. Modern civilization has brought with it many gifts, and one of them is the agate ring, which is a pure delight. To get most pleasure out of it you should have a red one, so that when things are dull you may hold it up against the sun, and see it glow with ruby fires.

The science of colours is only now beginning to be

studied seriously; but it is, I believe, a recognized fact that human beings are profoundly influenced by the colours of their surroundings, and that health of mind, and consequently of body, may be assisted by wall-papers and pictures. Indeed, I have heard that medical men on the Continent are even meditating the possibility of "colour cures" for nervous disorders. All this, of course, is somewhat outside my subject, but the smallest of things is related to the greatest, and so minute a trifle as an agate ring has, in my opinion, a definite æsthetic value. There are periods of intense gloom in fishing, as in life, and any little spot of brightness is to be treasured.

I should not, however, thus celebrate the agate ring unless it had more solid merits. In pike-fishing you do a great deal of casting, and the bait is constantly being despatched at a great pace to a distance of 20, 30, or even 40 yards. This involves much wear and tear for the line, which at each cast rattles through the rings of the rod as a cable rattles through a pulley. Lines are rather expensive things, and *good* lines are rather precious property, therefore anything that helps them is a boon. The agate ring does this by greatly reducing the friction, and also by not getting worn with use. Even the best metal rings are sure to be worn into grooves with hard fishing, and these grooves play the mischief with a line, scraping off its dressing and ultimately, perhaps, causing a disaster.

Wealthy persons should have all the rings on their split-cane rod made of agate; but we are not all wealthy, and the rest of us have to compromise with porcelain, which is not so exquisite to look at, but is quite as efficient as a line-preserver. Porcelain rings can be put on to a rod at much less cost than those of agate, and are an admirable substitute. The only thing I have against them is that if I hit one of them against a stone, or a tree, or a bridge, it breaks; but, of course, I ought not to hit it against hard things. The novice should remember not to hit his porcelain rings against features of the landscape.

Agate is rather stronger than porcelain, but even agate is not proof against a shrewd blow. I remember once finding a friend in a state of ecstasy regarding his new trout-rod. It had just come from the makers, and had lovely agate top rings. I took it in my hand and began to wave it, as one's manner is. There was a gas-bracket in the middle of the room, and in the twinkling of an eye I had abolished one of the agate rings. So the first event in that rod's active career was a return to its makers to be repaired, and my friend has a secret conviction that it has never been the same rod since. Nor does he allow me to wave rods in his room any more—a sad business altogether!

Recently I have seen a porcelain ring which was made in two pieces, one screwing into the other. I do not know if similar rings can be made small enough for pike-

rods (the one figured is more suited to sea-rods), but if they can they would be a decided help, enabling replacement of a broken ring to be made by the waterside. The ring is made by Allcock of Redditch, and can no doubt be obtained through retail dealers.

Fig. 3.

You do not want too many rings on a pike-rod: one on the butt, two on the middle joint, and two beside the top ring on the top joint, are plenty. A greater number only makes the rod look and feel clumsy, and does not help casting a bit, while it increases the expense of fitment.

The third rod in the diagram (p. 27) is a light yet fairly powerful split-cane fly-rod, 10 feet 3 inches in length and 7 ounces 2 drachms in weight, and its curve is caused by a weight of 3 ounces. I regard it as an admirable type of rod for general fly-fishing, being delicate enough in action to serve for small fish, such as dace, and yet having enough power for big ones, such as chub, in many circumstances. It is made in two joints, which makes it somewhat more difficult to carry about than if it were in three, but which gives its owner the advantage of having only one set of ferrules to bother about.

Ferrules in a fly-rod are the point of weakness, and they have a disgusting habit of getting loose. This is more the case with greenheart rods than with split-cane,

and it is more the case with cheap rods than with expensive ones, but it may happen to any rod. Loose ferrules may induce a smash, so it is well to test them from time to time. Testing is an easy matter: hold the rod between thumb and forefinger just where the ferrule joins the wood or cane, and work the upper part of the rod up and down. If the ferrule is loose, you will

Fig. 4.

at once feel the jar of the metal on the wood. If it is not loose, you will feel nothing, and your mind may be easy.

I have no hesitation in upholding split-cane as the best material for a single-handed fly-rod, if only on the score of its trustworthiness. Greenheart is its most serious rival, and so far as action goes it is not inferior, perhaps; some men find that greenheart suits them better, and is pleasanter to fish with. On this head I have no quarrel with it at all, and like it very much. But personally I have smashed so many greenheart rods in the act of casting, or by getting hitched up in trees or herbage, that I find it inadequate for my rough methods. The novice should learn to avoid roughness. You cannot pull a bush up or a tree down with a light fly-rod, and the voice within you which tells you that

you should try to do so is the voice of a lying prophet.

A cork handle, a blunt spike which can be fastened to the end of the butt, an agate ring on the butt and another on the top—these are desirable for a modern fly-rod. For its action it is not so easy to speak. Some men like rods as stiff as pokers, others prefer them as supple as whips. Personally, I prefer something between the two—a rod which "plays" right down to the hand, but which, at the same time, has enough stiffness for a quick recovery. If you get a rod of the same length and weight as No. 3 in the diagram, which takes the same curve when it lifts 3 ounces, you will probably have a rod of the action which I consider ideal. I say "probably" because I believe that matching rods is a very subtle business, which really requires the maker's eye and hand.

As with bottom-fishing rods, so with fly-rods, it is unlikely that a man is ultimately going to be content with one, since different rivers and fish seem to require different weapons. But such a rod as that described will never become a useless possession, so it will be quite safe to make a beginning with it.

The price of fly-rods varies with different makers, and I cannot attempt the invidious task of contrasting merits. If you pay five guineas for a split-cane rod with two tops, you may be pretty sure that you are getting the best that can be put into a rod in the way of material

and workmanship, and that the rod, without accidents, will last for many years. On the other hand, I have had one or two excellent rods which only cost me two guineas, so I am not going to say that cheap rods are necessarily inferior. A tackle-maker with a reputation to keep up will not sell rubbish, whatever the price that he asks. The sale of a bad rod loses him not only a customer, but also recommendations, for no one is more lavish of advice to his friends than an angler who has recently purchased a new rod with which he is thoroughly pleased. The transaction, he feels, shows his own cleverness up in a very favourable light.

One or two observations on rods in general before we proceed to other matters. A rod is always sold with a case, a long bag of brown or grey stuff, which may be sewn into separate compartments for the separate joints. When you buy the rod, see that the case is roomy enough to allow for shrinkage if it gets wet, as is sure to happen sooner or later. See also that there is a loop at the closed end of the case by which the rod can be hung on a nail or hook. When you put the rod into its case, put each joint in finer end first. Some men reverse the tops, probably with the idea of protecting them, but I think that tends to warp them. When you hang the rod case on the nail, leave the strings untied, with the exception of the one at the butt-end. That must be tied, of course, but loosely. A rod tied up very tight

and left for a long time is very likely to get somewhat warped.

If you have bought an expensive fly-rod, consider whether you will not give it a grooved case of the kind shown in the accompanying illustration. It involves a

Fig. 5.

few extra shillings, but it is a great protection both to the rod and its rings in travelling, and it also helps to keep the joints straight.

The stoppers that are sold with the rod are useful to it, for they keep the female ferrules free from dust or dirt, and also may protect them from getting crushed in the case of an accident to the rod while it is in its case. Stoppers are more liable to get lost than anything in the world, and some men get over this difficulty by having them sewn into the rod-case, so that each joint when pushed home finds its stopper waiting for it. It is a good plan for careless persons, but often one wants to carry the rod to the water without its case but not set up, and then the stoppers ought to be in position, especially if it is raining; damp ought by all means to be kept out of the ferrules. On the whole, the best plan is to get into the habit of not losing the stoppers, but I do not know how this may be done.

Sometimes after a day's fishing the ferrules will stick so that one cannot get them apart. Heating the metal

(do not on any account heat the *wood*) in the flame of a candle will generally get over the difficulty; or a few drops of paraffin may be applied to the junction of the male and female ferrules and allowed to work in. After an hour this also should have had the desired effect. If you call in a friend to help, be sure that he does not attempt to twist the ferrule by grasping the wood. Obstinate ferrules should be grasped thus:

Fig. 6.

So, too, if you use a vice, be careful that only the metal is in the instrument's jaws, otherwise you will infallibly strain and perhaps break the rod. Prevention is always better than cure, and you can prevent ferrules from sticking by smearing the male ferrule with grease of some kind. Soap is often used. The preparations sold for making lines float are excellent, and I generally use one or other of them myself. Failing other things, a lead-pencil applied to the ferrules will have a sufficiently greasing effect. I believe that some tackle-makers depend entirely on black-lead; but for myself I have more faith in grease.

Reels are the next things to be considered; indeed, they should be considered concurrently with rods, for when you buy your rod you were wise to buy a reel to suit it. A 4-inch reel of the Nottingham type, easy-

running, with an adjustable check, and not too heavy, is a piece of property which will never lose its usefulness. A 3½-inch reel of the same kind is perhaps big enough for ordinary bottom-fishing, but for pike I prefer the 4-inch size, and sometimes use one of 4½ inches with heavy baits.

It is worth while getting the best quality of wooden reel while you are about it, because for the few extra shillings you get well-seasoned wood and need not be so much afraid of warping. Cheap reels may warp so badly in time that they become useless. For about ten shillings you can get a thoroughly good reel. You can, of course, spend much more if you like. There are many ingenious reels on the market suited for pike-fishing, which cost from twenty to forty shillings, and are worth the money. But they are luxuries, and no one need be afraid that a Nottingham, or one of its inexpensive cousins, is not good enough for practical fishing. Later I may have something more to say about reels with automatic braking apparatus.

Of fly-reels there are endless varieties. So long as a reel will hold plenty of line, is strong and not too heavy, and has a fairly melodious check (beware of reels with raucous voices if you have any music in your system), it does not matter what kind of reel it is. Choose one about 3¼ inches in diameter, not too narrow in the drum, and about 5 ounces in weight, and you will find that it balances the rod well enough. With

the line wound on it, it will weigh about 1 ounce more. For fifteen shillings you can get an excellent reel that will last for years.

Lines for these reels are the next requirement, and here we come to the difficult question, "Dressed or undressed?" I call it difficult because so many good fishermen use undressed lines for bottom-fishing and spinning that I feel my own partiality for dressed lines to be very likely an error. But I see, for all that, many advantages in the dressed line, so I shall recommend it. Lines for fresh-water fishing are nearly all made of silk nowadays, and the dressing consists chiefly of a thorough soaking in linseed oil, with very careful drying afterwards. The best line is that which has received most care during this process. The worst line is that with which the drying process has been scamped or hastened by the use of too much varnish or other drying substance. I imagine that varnish forms an ingredient in the dressing of many of the best lines on the market, but it is obviously used with great discretion by the makers.

A sticky line or a line which is too hard is fit for nothing, and it is necessary to pick one with care if you want to be quite satisfied. The perfect line should be smooth to the touch, pliant when you bend it, and also solid in consistency, and it should be free from any suspicion of stickiness. The production of such a line involves both time and trouble, therefore you must be

prepared to pay a good price. But the result will be satisfactory, and with care a really good line will last a long time.

For all-round bottom-fishing a fine line of the size usually described as H in the tackle catalogues will do admirably. It is strong enough to land fish up to 10 pounds with reasonable care, or up to 20 pounds with a little more than care—that is to say, skill. For ten shillings or less you ought to be able to get 50 yards of this line in the very finest quality. Fifty yards of the same kind of line three sizes stouter will cost a shilling or two more, and will do all that is required for pike-fishing.

For the fly-reel a line of the same kind, but tapering at each end and only 30 yards in length, is required. It will cost somewhere about half a guinea. These double-tapered lines are made in different thicknesses, and some men prefer to use rather heavy ones, others rather light. Personally, I prefer rather a heavy line for most purposes, and the line which I destine for the fly-rod described (one of the two decorating the Japanese vases, by the way) weighs exactly 1 ounce. You cannot be sure of getting a line of this precise weight, but you can get within a fraction of it. Do not, however, for such a rod choose a line which weighs more than 1 ounce.

It is good that each reel should be well filled with line, so here comes in the question of what is called

"backing"—that is to say, supplementary undressed silk line which is spliced to the dressed line and wound on to the reel first. Backing should not be much finer than the other line, but it can be rather finer, as it is very strong. Each of the wooden reels will accommodate at least 50 yards of suitable backing, probably more, and the fly-reel should be able to take 30 yards. Do not, however, have more line in all than the reels will hold comfortably. A fly-reel which is *too* full is apt to chafe the dressing of a line badly. The backing, of course, has other uses besides that of filling up a reel. If some day you are lucky enough to get hold of a very big fish, you *may* be glad of the extra length of line. Many a salmon hooked on trout tackle would have been landed if the angler had had enough line to allow for long runs. A big carp, too, is a fish that may run out 60 or 70 yards of line before he can be stopped. As a matter of fact, these emergencies seldom arise, but it is just us well to be prepared for them.

Rods, reels, and lines are now provided for. There are certain other essentials that may as well be discussed in this chapter. First, the landing-net. There are different kinds of landing-nets, but on the whole I like the pear-shaped wooden ring best. Though it is not so easy of transport as other kinds that fold up, it is simple, reasonably strong, and not expensive. As a handle for it I decidedly like the kind known as "telescopic." It is supported by a sling worn over the

shoulder, and it has a knuckle-joint which enables the net to hang comfortably at the angler's side. A single motion of the hand both shoots the net out to full length and locks it in position. A net slung in this way is a great comfort for fly-fishing, or any kind of fishing in which the angler has to move about much. For more sedentary work it is possible to have a spare handle, simply made of a long piece of cane without any knuckle-joint. The ring should be rather large, say 16 inches by 14 inches, with a net about 18 inches deep.

Though the pear-shaped ring is, as I have said, somewhat awkward to carry about, yet it may have uses even then. It forms quite a good protection for a two-jointed fly-rod, if it is strapped to it so that the delicate end is shielded by the ring.

Of hooks, gut-casts, floats, and other lesser things, I shall have frequent occasion to speak later, so it would be sheer waste of time to say much about them now, but perhaps a few general words on gut may be useful.

Gut can be got in all sizes, from the heavy stuff used for Norwegian salmon to the gossamer five times drawn that is sometimes appropriate for roach. Few branches of coarse fishing require gut much stronger than what is known as "refina"—that is to say, the finest gut that you can get in its natural state. Drawn gut can be made much finer, but only by a shaving or paring process that impairs its strength. It answers well

enough for fish which do not reach a great size, and in the hands of an expert can be made efficient with even heavy fish up to 3 or 4 pounds. An all-round fisherman wants a selection of gut varying from stout refina down to 4X or perhaps 5X, and the best plan is to buy bundles of fifty or a hundred strands ready picked by the tackle-merchant. If you have your supply of gut in all necessary sizes, you can very quickly tie gut-casts as you want them. Gut should be soaked for a few minutes in warm water, or for more minutes in cold water, before it is tied into knots. The simplest knot for joining lengths of gut is shown in Fig. 7. For a

Fig. 7.

better knot still (especially for stout gut) I owe a debt of gratitude to that delightful book "Letters to a Salmon-Fisher's Sons," by Mr. A. H. Chaytor. It is shown in Fig. 8.

Fig. 8.

Laying in a stock of gut as I have advised involves a certain outlay at first, but it saves money in the end, for casts ready tied are much more expensive than a

corresponding amount of gut untied. A special case to keep the gut in is useful, and I know nothing better for the purpose than a wallet with about a dozen parchment pockets which is a common object in the tackle-shops. There is a belief that gut will not keep sound for more than a year, but according to my experience this is mere superstition. If only it is protected from dust, damp, and strong light, gut will keep for many years. I have and use gut which is at least ten years old, and have no fault to find with it. If each bundle is wrapped in soft paper and kept in its parchment pocket, it will serve you well as long as the strands last.

A receptacle for fish is a necessary—two receptacles if you are going to do much pike-fishing, because pike take up more room than most other fish. For perch, roach, chub, tench, and so on, a creel is best, and it should be big and strong—big so that it may hold three or four 3-pounders if need be; strong so that it may be able to serve you as a seat. An 18-inch creel is none too big for one's occasions. As a mode of attaching it to one's shoulder I cordially approve of the two-strap arrangement, invented, I think, by the well-known French sportsman, M. Louis Bouglé. I adopted it several years ago, and find it a great boon in carrying a heavy weight. It is also of great service when one is cycling, preventing the creel from swinging round to one side. In jumping a ditch, too, one finds further merit in it. The illustration (Fig. 9) shows how it works.

I suppose the same arrangement could be applied to a bag, which is the other receptacle needed in the equipment. There are plenty of good bags to be got, with separate compartments for fish, tackle, lunch, etc. In many the fish compartment expands with gussets, and will hold long fish like pike or barbel comfortably. So that it be big enough and as light as it can be consistently with strength, it does not matter what bag you buy. Remember in choosing a bag that a 9-pound pike is not a very large one, and that it measures full 30 inches; also that on a good day you may want to find room for three or four fish as big or bigger.

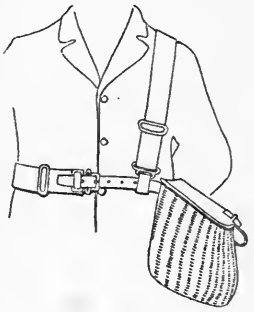

Fig. 9.

Waterproof raiment of various kinds is part of an angler's necessities. Boots are very important, because one encounters much wet grass and sloppy ground. I always have a pair of india-rubber boots for wet days. They are sold, I think, as "deck-boots," and cost about eighteen shillings a pair. You can have them lined with felt or plain. I prefer them plain, and make an extra pair of stockings serve as a lining if necessary. It seems to be pure luck whether these boots wear out quickly or not. One pair lasted me for three years. Another is looking sorry for itself after three months.

I fancy that it is not much good trying to mend them.

The mackintosh, rainproof coat, oilskin, or whatever the protection is that an angler affects, should be long enough to cover the tops of these knee-boots amply; otherwise streams of rain will enter them, and that is most distressing even to a philosophic mind. Streams of rain are also liable to enter by way of the neck unless the hat affords protection. I earnestly counsel a broad and stiff brim on a hat that will resist rain; it is a great protection to spectacled folk. On this point I speak with emphasis.

CHAPTER III

THE FISH

I HAVE spoken earlier of the variety of interest to be found in this business of coarse fishing. Let me now confess that this is largely a thing of artificial culture. "When wild in wood the noble savage," our respected ancestor, "ran," it is not to be supposed that he made much distinction between one fish and another, except in so far as one fish might be larger and more satisfying or easier to come at than its neighbour. When he could, he no doubt angled with a spear; when he could not, he made himself a rod and line out of a sapling and some vegetable fibre, tied to the end of it some sort of "gorge" implement, and hid this in any bait that he could get, probably a worm. I do not know what the first "hook" was like, but I suspect that it was not a hook at all, but a little straight splinter of horn, bone, or flint, which a fish could swallow without much difficulty, but which he could not afterwards disgorge. At any rate, some of the authorities on the implements of primitive man hold that this was the case, and it

seems to me a reasonable supposition. The hook might easily have been evolved by the accident of a gorge being bent, or by one of those flashes of inspiration which kindle invention.

Our ancestor would find that most fish at one time or other were ready to seize and swallow a worm. He may have noted that they were not all, at all seasons and in all places and states of water, equally ready, but it must have taken him, and our other ancestors his sons, a longish time to puzzle out the caprices of the different fishes that swam within their ken. The length of time may be measured by the fact that even now the problems are not all solved. It is not much more than a century ago that many writers on fishing, chiefly Southrons, I admit, in advising the beginner how to catch salmon, told him to angle in the deepest and swiftest parts of rivers with the hugest worms he could procure. In the manner of men treating of myths, they might speak of taking salmon with large and gaudy flies, but it is quite obvious that (with only a few exceptions) they considered worms the most profitable lure in this kind of fishing.

It is, of course, true that worms have their uses for the salmon-fisher, but these uses are so limited by occasion (to say nothing of human inclination) that worming for salmon is now considered but an unimportant branch of the sport. In the same way worms have their uses in all other kinds of fresh-water fishing,

for you can still catch all fish in the primitive manner, which is what it amounts to. But if you are going to pick and choose your fish, to say to yourself, "On this day I will catch roach, on that barbel, on the next chub," and so on, then you must have other baits in your creel and other devices in your mind. Every single fish in the longish list of British species has its own peculiarities, its own special tastes, and requires special attention from the angler. So it is all sufficiently complicated.

And yet, at the same time, all these fish have enough fish nature in common to make it possible for the angler to catch every one with the same bait used in one unvarying way. In rural solitudes you will find anglers who give practical illustration of this. The rustic fisherman often is content to use a worm and nothing else, year in, year out, and if you talk to him you will find that he has in his time caught every kind of fish that the water contains. Of some kinds he will not be able to count many examples in his annals, but that does not worry him. He is the natural man fishing "for anything that he can catch." The artificial man, on the other hand, comes from some great city, and aims at some particular species of fish. He is so highly specialized that he regards it as somewhat remarkable if he catches any other kind, or, at any rate, any other kind of really different habit. When, for instance, a pike seizes the piece of cheese paste meant

for a chub, he feels quite a thrill of pleased surprise. Very likely he will write a letter to the sporting newspapers on "The Voracity of Pike."

It is something to have reduced fishing to a science so far that you can angle for a particular kind of fish, not only with a reasonable hope of catching plenty of that kind, but with a reasonable certainty that you will catch few of any other kind, and that is what has been effected by amateur fishermen. It makes the whole sport ten times as interesting, and also saves it from any risk of monotony. Though you were to fish every day of the open season, I believe, by taking a little trouble, you could get some novelty into each by changing from fish to fish, from method to method, and from experiment to experiment, to say nothing of the assistance that you would receive from our interesting climate. Somebody has said that no Englishman ought ever to be dull with his weather to watch, and certainly the angler can add this to his table of interest.

Some consideration of fish in general, and a few remarks on their food and characteristics, may be appropriate at this point. The angler need not have a very exhaustive knowledge of scientific natural history, but he must have some acquaintance with the fish as living things, and especially must he endeavour to find out what they like to eat.

Some of them like to eat each other. Among our coarse fish the pike and eel have the most decided bent

in this direction, and the perch is perhaps the next greatest cannibal. I say "perhaps," because the chub is often quite as voracious, and I am not sure how far it depends on fish diet. Possibly it only feeds on its neighbours at certain times of the year. I fancy that there are very few fish which will not, when opportunity offers, devour other fish if small enough and convenient enough, but most of them, as carp, tench, bream, barbel, roach, rudd, dace, and gudgeon, are by nature more inclined to a mixed diet of insect larvæ, crustaceans, snails, and vegetable foods, with, no doubt, such chance provender as may accrue from the land, as slugs, worms, and so on.

Worms in particular are acceptable to all fish, so it is evident that more worms get into the water than we know. About the only clue we have to this is the observation of mountain trout streams after heavy rain. If you catch a trout in one of these streams during or just after a thick yellow spate, you will find that he is simply stuffed with worms, and it is evident that heavy rain washes them abundantly into a stream. Whether in dry weather worms get into the water I do not know, but I think they must to some extent. The thick yellow flood is comparatively rare in coarse-fish rivers, which are for the most part deep, sluggish, and of gradual fall. Even their tributaries are not violent enough, as a rule, to bring in a great tribute of worms, as do the rapid little burns of a hill-country.

It is possible that worms get into these streams in a more natural manner, simply by the process of falling in when they are crawling about on the grassy banks on dewy nights, as is their custom.

To take the more important fish and deal with their tastes in food now may save tiresome elaboration later, and at the same time it will be convenient to touch briefly on their nature and habits, and to give such details as to their size and dwelling-places as the angler finds useful.

First comes the pike, the biggest and most important, and on the whole the most widely distributed of all coarse fish. Pike may be found everywhere, in running water and still, in mountain lakes and in lowland canals. Some rivers and sheets of water know them not, of course, but there are very few districts in the whole of the British Isles in which they are not to be found.

The food of pike is, broadly speaking, anything that is alive and is small enough to be swallowed. Fish, of course, contribute most to their diet, because they are most easily caught, but it is no uncommon thing for big pike to eat water-voles, moorhens, young ducks, and other warm-blooded creatures which swim over them. There are well-accredited instances on record of pike seizing even so large a mouthful as a pheasant which has been shot and fallen into the water. In the early spring, when the frogs are spawning, pike consume

a good many of them, and a frog is a useful bait then. No doubt tadpoles, beetles, newts, shrimps, snails, and other water-creatures, are eaten by pike, especially when they are young, and now and then purely vegetable baits, such as breadcrust, will be seized by these omnivorous fish; it is usually the case, however, that the bait is in motion when the pike takes it, and the explanation is that he has assumed it to be some live thing. He will run at a leaden plummet in the same spirit of optimism.

The size attained by pike is still a matter of some uncertainty, but it may be stated that in England and Scotland any fish over 20 pounds is a big one. Comparatively few anglers have caught, or can hope to catch, one of that size. If all our open waters were to be decreed a complete rest for ten years, and no pike-fishing were to be done till 1923, the number of 20-pound pike available would be found highly gratifying to enthusiasts resuming their sport. But as things are waters are fished much too hard for many pike to survive long enough to make old bones, and we have to be content with a scale of values on which a 10-pounder appears as a very good fish—this, of course, for the rivers and lakes which are accessible to the majority.

The fortunate minority, which gets days on well-preserved water, can raise its standard to 15 pounds for a river and 20 pounds for a lake. There are even possibilities of a 30-pounder here and there. The

biggest pike I have ever seen in the body came from the Dorsetshire Stour, near Wimborne, a year or two ago. When first caught (in a net, I believe) it must have weighed not far off 40 pounds. I weighed it myself four days afterwards, and it was then well over 38 pounds. This is the biggest river pike I ever heard of. But a huge fish was caught in the Wye in 1910 by Major Booth, who was spinning for salmon. It weighed 37 pounds, and is the heaviest river pike ever caught on a rod. The Wye yielded a fish of 34 pounds in 1903, the Tweed one of 31 pounds in 1907, and the Thames one of 29 pounds in the same year.

The list of 30-pounders from lakes is a good deal longer. The late Mr. A. Jardine had one of over 37 pounds at Amersham, and one of over 36 pounds in Kent. One of 36 pounds was killed on the Broads some thirty-five years ago, and there are plenty of well-authenticated fish of 30 pounds, or a pound or two more, caught in English waters.

Ireland has no doubt produced some 40-pounders, and possibly fish of 50 pounds. There has, however, always been a difficulty in substantiating the Irish records, partly because Ireland is Ireland, partly because, in a land of salmon and trout, pike have never been thought much of. Not a few accounts of the Irish monsters end up with the statement that the body, after having excited a little mild surprise, was promptly disposed of as food either for men or pigs. For all

that, there is enough reasonable ground now for admitting that Irish pike run up to 40 pounds or more.

Loch Ken, in Galloway, has produced some very big pike in its time, and though the 72-pounder described in Daniel's "Rural Sports" is usually mentioned among the traditions of mythology, Mr. Tate Regan, of the Natural History Museum, has recently made out quite a good case for its supposed weight, after a careful examination of the skull, which is still preserved. Ardent but doubting souls who want to have their faith in big pike propped up should refer to that author's excellent little book, "British Fresh-water Fishes." On the whole, I do not see why we should not believe nearly all that we are told about the pike—even that admirable old story which Sir John Hawkins found in a newspaper in 1765, and promptly and properly put into his later editions of "The Complete Angler." Here it is:

"On Tuesday last, at Lillieshall Lime Works, near Newport, a pool about 9 yards deep, that had not been fished for ages, was let off by means of a level brought up to drain the works, when an enormous pike was found; he was drawn out by means of a rope fastened round his head and gills, amidst hundreds of spectators, in which service a great many men were employed; he weighed upwards of 170 pounds, and is thought to be the largest ever seen. Some time ago the clerk of the parish was trolling in the above pool, when his bait

was seized by this furious creature, which by a sudden jerk pulled him in, and doubtless would have devoured him also, had he not by wonderful agility and dexterous swimming escaped the dreadful jaws of this voracious animal."

I would much rather believe this story than not, because, believing, I should be prepared to believe other stories of more recent date, which would be—nay, which *are*—very comforting to me. The tale of the big pike which circulates in every well-disposed fishing district is a wonderful incentive to unwearying endeavour. And it is far from being impossible in many instances.

Pike spawn in the early spring, towards the end of March or the beginning of April for the most part; but I think that the season and locality may have something to do with their breeding-time, for occasionally they seem to spawn even in February. They begin to be in good condition by about August, and are at their best during the winter. February is, on the whole, the best month for big fish.

Laymen sometimes want to know what is the difference between a pike and a jack. There is no difference. At one time there was an idea that a jack was a pike weighing less than 4 pounds (a good many fish have or have had different names at different sizes), but the distinction of age has been lost sight of, and the two names, for all practical purposes, are now interchangeable. The size-limit which a sportsman ought to set

himself varies with the kind of water he fishes. On the Thames and similar open waters any pike of 4 pounds or more is, I think, legitimate spoil. On private waters with a better head of fish perhaps 5 pounds is a fairer size. On really good waters one ought not to keep anything under 7 pounds. One has to be guided in this matter by probabilities, and to keep a just balance between sportsmanlike ethics and sheer quixotism. If you happen on a really good day in a choice private lake, you may be able to give yourself a 15-pound limit, and still have a couple of brace for your pains. But on many rivers a brace of fish a little over 4 pounds may be as much as you can expect.

The eel came next in the rough list I set down before, so he may as well come next here too, though the order is, I fancy, somewhat irresponsible. The eel eats exactly what the pike eats, probably paying more attention than the pike to trifles, since it is a smaller creature. But we do not really know the whole truth about the eel, for it is somewhat nocturnal in its habits, and human beings are not. Observation of the eel has therefore not been carried so far as it might be. There is a dim suspicion growing in the minds of owners of trout fisheries that eels are not exactly to be encouraged, but I am sure that not a half of their iniquities has yet been discovered. Some day there will be a great outcry against these sinuous marauders.

The life-history of the eel is as mysterious as that of the salmon—more mysterious, in fact, for the salmon plausibly breeds in fresh water, where enemies to its eggs and young are comparatively few, and feeds in the sea, where sustenance is comparatively abundant. The eel reverses this process practically in all its details. As young salmon (parr) spend their immature days in the fresh water, so do young eels ("leptocephali" is their not inadequate name) spend their immature days in the sea. And as the parr become smolts and proceed downwards, so the leptocephali become elvers and proceed upwards. In many rivers they must "speak each other in passing," as the poet has it, for the two migrations take place at much the same time of year. Some of the larger smolts may even do more than "speak" some of the smaller elvers. Little eels line the stomachs of honest fish very handsomely, and the elver run is a signal for many hearty meals for trout, chub, and the like.

This elver run on a river like the Severn is a remarkable sight. At times you can take the little wriggling things out by netsful. And it is wonderful how they will make their way up a strong weir, or even round it; for I have seen them wriggling at the sides, on which the only moisture available was where silkweed filled the cracks between the stones. These myriads of elvers presumably spread out from the main river into every tributary, from the tributaries into every ditch and

pond. Where necessary, they seem to do more than that. The Thames, so far as can be ascertained, has no run of elvers now, because the lower reaches are too much polluted for them. Yet it has plenty of grown eels. Whence come they? It looks as though they come from the Severn by way of the Thames and Severn Canal. Nature, abhorring a vacuum as usual, seems to have made the superabundance of one great river serve the poverty of the other.

That eels can travel across the land I have little doubt. Colonel R. F. Meysey Thompson has recently, in *The Salmon and Trout Magazine*, recorded finding one in mid-journey, and there are other witnesses who have testified to similar things. That there is not more evidence is sufficiently explained by the eel's nocturnal habits mentioned before. Eels wriggling through damp grass would naturally escape notice in the dark, though they might perhaps be responsible for some of the queer noises that one hears by the water-side at night.

The eel is, one would say, constructed to go on his belly like the serpent, and for the most part that is what he does. But at night, I fancy, he swims about at mid-water if need be, and even in the daytime I have seen an eel quite close to the top, picking larvæ or snails or some such food from the under side of water-lily leaves. Now and then a fly-fisher in the dusk or darkness hooks some ponderous thing, which he fondly

hopes is the father of all trout, but which after a long battle turns out to be a big eel. That proves that eels must be pretty active when they are hunting.

Very large eels are not often caught on the rod, chiefly because anglers do not lay themselves out to catch them. The eel is not exactly a popular fish, and I have met very few brother-anglers who think of him even as kindly as I do—nor do I think of him *very* kindly. Still, I owe him some amusing times, as shall hereinafter appear, so I will not abuse him overmuch; and, as I have said, he is admirable meat.

If you have caught a 3-pounder, you have caught what is decidedly a large one for ordinary angling. But if you took pains and fished specially, you might get 5 or 6 pounders—perhaps even bigger ones. I have seen eels up to 9 or 10 pounds once or twice. Stoddart, in his "Angler's Companion," records the capture of a monster of some 20 pounds, but specimens of such weight must be rare in these islands. In New Zealand, by all accounts, monster eels are common, and impressive stories are told of bathers being dragged under by the foot, drowned, and afterwards devoured at leisure. A big eel is an extremely powerful beast, so the thing is more awesome than impossible.

The angler sees most of eels in the summer, and usually finds them most responsive to his lures when the weather is hot and thundery. I have caught one or two in winter when the weather was mild, but I do not

think they feed much then. Their migration to the sea takes place in the autumn, in late September or early October, and it is then that the eel-nets reap their biggest harvest. At what period of their lives eels migrate is a mystery, for some are large and some are small. Having migrated, they do not appear in fresh water again, so far as we know. I do not myself see why a certain number of old eels should not return to the rivers without attracting notice; they are not nearly so obvious to all beholders as salmon or sea-trout. Still, the fact remains that men of science believe that no eel ever returns, and there it may be left. Nature provides an analogy in the case of the Pacific salmon, of which few, if any, ever survive their ascent in the rivers of British Columbia. Perhaps eels also do not survive their spawning.

The perch is the third of our fish of prey, if I may borrow the convenient German term for them. Its food is that of the others, the only difference being that it cannot manage such large mouthfuls. It probably makes up for this by zeal and numbers. A shoal of perch pursuing a shoal of minnows gives an excellent display of hearty activity. Perch are more prone to eat insects and larvæ than pike, and they are particularly fond of worms. Indeed, I think that worms judiciously used are, on the whole, the best bait that the angler can employ.

Most of our waters which are not absolute mountain

torrents contain perch, though not by any means in such quantities as could be wished. They are delicate fish, and rather liable to diseases. Some thirty years ago there was an outbreak of disease which destroyed great numbers of perch in the Kennet and other streams of the south. About the same time there was great mortality among the crayfish, and it may be that the two misfortunes were connected. Now, however, the perch seem to have re-established themselves, and the crayfish are also becoming plentiful again.

Perch do not grow to a great size in this country. A 3-pounder is rare and a 2-pounder is unusual. There are legends of 8-pounders (Pennant recorded one of that size from the Serpentine), but the angler need not flatter himself with hopes of fish like that. If he aims at some day getting one between 4 pounds and 5 pounds, he will aim as high as healthy ambition requires. A few men have caught 5-pounders, and they have my respectful congratulations. The biggest I ever saw, out of a glass case, was a fish of 4¼ pounds, caught in a salmon-net on the Severn at Tewkesbury. It lived in a greenhouse tank for a few days, to the admiration of all beholders, and was ultimately returned to the river.

The Wye occasionally yields a 4-pound perch, and the Avon and Stour (Dorsetshire) are, I think, capable of doing as much, but for monsters you must chiefly look to big lakes. Horsey Mere, in the Broads district,

has a reputation for vast perch, and so have some of the lakes in the Dukeries. Ireland also breeds big ones, the Shannon and its lakes probably being the best locality.

Perch spawn somewhere between March and April, and are certainly in good condition by July, possibly by June 16, when the coarse-fishing season opens. The Lea Conservancy regulations used to defer the opening of the perch season till August 1, on the ground, I suppose, of the fish being not recovered from spawning by then. I should say, however, that they recover very quickly, and, moreover, do not lose condition in spawning nearly so much as most other fish. April is the month in which they need rigorous protection, especially in the Broads, where April perch-fishing used at one time to be a favourite recreation. I trust that a close season for the Broads will soon be in force, and that perch-fishing will improve once more. At present it seems to have sadly deteriorated in many places where it used to be good.

From the point of view of the table, any perch of ½ pound or more is worth bringing home, and a ½-pound size-limit is what I would suggest to the angler. A fish of 1 pound or more is quite a good one for a river like the Thames. In many lakes and ponds you find swarms of perch running up to about 6 or 7 inches, and apparently never growing any bigger. That argues either that the stock has deteriorated

through in-breeding, or that it is too large for the supply of food. In the second case, it might be well to net out a large number of small ones every year, and see if those that remained increased in size.

There is a near relation of the perch which is very common in some rivers, but rare enough in others to puzzle anglers when they catch it. This is the ruffe or pope. It is exactly like the perch in shape, but differs from it in colour, being spotted instead of barred, and having a general colour scheme of light brown and black instead of golden-olive, black and red.

The ruffe is an absurd little fish with great determination of character. If it makes up its mind to swallow a lobworm as long as itself, swallow that lobworm it will. Once a shoal of ruffe has discovered an angler, it will settle down in front of him, and leave him at last without a shred of patience or temper. I have often caught twenty of these little plagues in an hour, and finally retired beaten. When you have returned one (they are much too small to keep), I believe he simply swims back to his position and waits for a fresh worm to approach him. He likes being hooked and returned.

In old days I occasionally caught rather large ruffe in the Severn, fish of some 3 ounces, and once I got one that was quite ¼ pound. I should say that that represented about the biggest size to which the fish will attain. In the Middlesex Colne, which is full of them

in places, I do not think I ever caught one of more than about 1 ounce.

We now come to the carp family, as it is called. It contains all the other coarse fish which are of any importance to the angler in this country. They differ from one another in appearance and habits, but all have a certain family resemblance in arrangement of scales, fins, teeth, and so on.

Keeping to the scheme of arrangement by mode of feeding, I will take the chub first. As I have said, this fish is decidedly a fish of prey at times, and in a trout-stream it probably does a great deal of damage among the fry. But it is not a cannibal all the time like the pike, nor do I quite know when it is most inclined to feed on small fish. Probably it takes to this form of diet in the winter, and also in the early summer, when it has just finished spawning. The most remarkable instance of the chub's voracity I ever came across, however, was in September, on the Ouse. The river was rather full, and in one meadow small fry were collected in thousands at the edge, just where the water covered a narrow strip of low-lying grass. The chub were simply beside themselves with enthusiasm at this opportunity, and were wallowing about everywhere, eating their fill. I have seen large trout doing the same thing in shallow water, but I do not remember another occasion on which chub were imitating them. Perhaps I have never since come across quite similar conditions.

Besides small fish, chub will eat anything that contains any nourishment. They are particularly fond of frogs, and doubtless do not draw the line at mice or small birds if they get a chance of them. Then they are ready to absorb insects, flies, wasps, bees, and all the host of water and land flies which are beloved of the trout. The sight of chub settling down to a square meal of Mayflies is one to make the trout-fisher's heart beat, till he realizes that these ravening monsters which he sees swirling under the far bank are not trout at all, and, further, that they are not even in season.

Lastly, your chub will at times take many kinds of vegetable baits—paste (especially if it be flavoured with cheese), macaroni, cherries, strawberries, and so on. In the early summer silkweed—the fine mossy stuff which you find on the stones or piles of a weir—seems to be much appreciated by chub, and possibly is as good for their systems as spinach is for ours.

Perhaps 10 pounds may be given as the outside weight that chub can reach—not that I ever had the privilege of weighing one nearly so big as that. I have seen one or two monsters in the water that seemed to me to be 10-pounders. A certain number of chub from 7 to 8 pounds are on record, the lower part of the Hampshire Avon having yielded several in the last few years. The Thames has given one or two, I think, and the Great Ouse one or two. Mr. J. W. Martin, in his attractive book "Coarse Fish Angling," gives

particulars of one of 7¾ pounds caught at Offord, which is probably the biggest on record. A fish of 7 pounds 14 ounces, however, was found dead at Christchurch, and this, when alive, probably weighed more, as it had been bitten by an otter. It was preserved by the late Mr. E. J. Walker, who had chub up to 7 pounds 5 ounces on the rod, and presented by him to the Piscatorial Society, in whose collection it may now be seen.

Chub spawn about the beginning of May, and after spawning seek the swift, shallow streams as a tonic. By the end of the month you will find plenty of them in the rough weir-streams, where they often cause disappointment to the trout-fisher by seizing his spinning-bait or fly. A 4-pound chub in a Thames weir-pool, even though not fully recovered from spawning, is capable of behaving very like a trout for a minute or two. The chub is of most importance to the angler on account of his pleasing habit of taking a fly. He gives very good sport indeed when he is in the humour.

As to the size at which you may properly take him, a good deal depends on where you fish. In some places chub are large and plentiful, and you might perhaps set yourself a size-limit of 1½ or even of 2 pounds. In less favoured rivers a pounder may be rather a good fish, and one of ¾ pound respectable. But as a rule, where you have chub at all in any quantity they run to a good size, and you may catch occasional 3 and even

4 pounders. That fact tends to make the angler's standard high. A 5-pounder is in most places a fish to be stuffed.

Continuing with the carp family, we come to fish which are, on the whole, vegetarian or insectarian rather than ichthyophagous, and I will deal with them rather as they come to mind than in any established order.

The roach occurs to me first, because it is probably the most popular of all our fish. In the south and middle of England, certainly, roach-fishing has more followers than any other branch of the sport. This is partly, I expect, because it is a restful kind of fishing, well suited to men who work hard all the week and need a quiet day of recreation at the end of it, but partly also because it requires a considerable amount of skill, and therefore taxes a man's brains to an extent which is absorbing. Roach-fishing has been described quite rightly as a fine art, but it is at the same time a pastime in which even a duffer may have *some* success, so it obviously has just claims to the appreciation in which it is held.

Roach feed on insects, larvæ, flies, and weed; also, very cordially, on the food which they get by favour of the angler. He calls it "ground-bait," and uses it merely as a mode of attracting fish to a given spot, and making them feed for his own purposes. But there are plenty of hard-fished waters where so much ground-bait

is used that the fish must look upon it as a regular feature of their well-ordered lives. Indeed, I have known cases where such fish as trout, which are by nature carnivorous, have been attracted to a constantly baited roach-swim, and taken up their abode there for the sake of the bread and bran so often thrown into it. If trout will do this, roach will obviously do it even more.

How far fish are susceptible to hereditary influence it is impossible to say, but it has struck me as a curious fact that roach are much more ready to take bread-paste and similar baits in rivers where they and their ancestors have been constantly fished for than in rivers or stretches of them where little or no roach-fishing is done. In such streams maggots or caddis grubs are much more likely to yield sport, because the fish are accustomed to them, or to things very like them, while they are not accustomed to bread in any form. How long it would take to get them into the ground-bait habit I do not know, but I have made several brief attempts to persuade them into it with very little success.

The biggest roach on record is one which was found in a reservoir belonging to the Bristol Water Company some seven or eight years ago. It weighed 3 pounds 10 ounces, and must be regarded as a prodigy. I do not know of another veritable 3-pounder, though from time to time such fish are reported. In every case of

which I myself have any knowledge they have proved to be something else, generally chub. Some waters hold large hybrids between roach and bream, and these look very like rather coarse roach, and might be mistaken for them without careful examination. Possibly some of the 3-pounders are to be explained in that way, but I myself have never caught a roach-bream hybrid over 1 pound 5 ounces. Only a year or two ago a big fish of 3 pounds 5 ounces was caught in the Thames, which had rather the look of a roach, and for some time was thought to be one. This turned out to be an ide or orfe, a fish fairly common on the Continent, but only known here as a casual visitor, imported with its cousin, the golden orfe, which is better known, for stocking ornamental waters.

I do not doubt that there *are* such things as 3-pound roach—indeed, the Bristol specimen proves that there must be—but they are so rare that many a lifelong fisherman has never caught even a 2-pounder, while very few indeed have had one of 2½ pounds. The biggest roach I am sure of, which was caught by angling, was the fish of 2 pounds 13 ounces taken by Mr. G. Edmunds in the Thames in 1903. There are one or two other well-accredited fish of an ounce or so less, but anything of 2 pounds or more is worth stuffing.

A roach of ½ pound is a good fish in most rivers, pounders in profusion only being vouchsafed by a few,

such as the Hampshire Avon and Stour, the Kennet in places, and one or two more. The Thames holds some big roach at times, but does not maintain a high average size. If you have a catch of Thames roach averaging ½ pound and containing nothing less than 6 ounces you may feel very content.

Roach spawn at about the same time as chub, in May, and they are seldom fit to be caught when the legal season begins on June 16. They ought to have at least another fortnight's grace and to receive protection till July. Some clubs do not allow roach-fishing in their waters till then. There is no reason, on the other hand, why fishing should not go on till the end of March. Should the Mundella Act ever be amended, an endeavour should be made to give it elasticity, so as to suit the various fish, which do not all need quite the same treatment.

The dace, for instance, spawns earlier than the roach, and is in good condition by the beginning of June, while at the beginning of March it is usually heavy in spawn.

Dace have similar feeding habits to those of roach, but they are more ready to take flies. Indeed, they may be regarded as definitely fly-feeding fish, like trout and grayling. This perhaps explains why they are not so ready to feed on farinaceous food as roach, and come more eagerly to maggots, grubs, and worms. The roach-fisher usually catches some among the roach, but

not so many as he would if he were fishing specially for them.

The biggest dace on record weighed 1 pound 6 ounces, and was caught in the Beane by the late Mr. Robinson. Mr. A. R. Matthews has had one of 1 pound 4 ounces from the same river. There are not many streams that produce dace over ¾ pound, and a ½-pounder in most places is a big one. In the Thames fish of 5 or 6 ounces are considered good ones, and a decent basket ought to include a certain number of that size, with perhaps a ½-pounder or two. The Kennet is the finest dace river I know, and in one or two of its reaches pounders are not exactly uncommon. I had five in one season on one stretch near Kintbury which weighed from 1 pound to 1 pound 2½ ounces, and four of them regard me from a glass case as I write.

I have only once had another pounder, and that came from a tributary of the Kennet lower down. I was extremely proud of it, because it was the only one of such magnitude that had ever been caught there, and I told quite a number of people what a fine fish it was, and how I was going to have it stuffed. They all agreed that I was right in this determination. And then it was put away in a nice cool cellar till the morning. Presently in came another angler with a grayling, rather a sorry specimen of about a pound. He showed it to us, and said that he did not think much of it, but

opined that it might serve as an offering to a friend of his who was fond of fish. We all approved of this, and thought that it showed a proper feeling on his part. The fish was then sent to the cellar.

Next morning he returned to town by a very early train, and before returning sent the maidservant to fetch his grayling and pack it in paper for him, which she did. I came down to breakfast at a reasonable hour, and found him just about to go. "My grayling?" he said, as the maid entered with a neat parcel, which he at once put into his fishing-bag. And so with mutual blessings we parted. After breakfast I went down to the cellar, so that my splendid dace might go off to the local taxidermist. And, behold, there was no dace! My expectant gaze was only rewarded by the sight of a grayling, rather a sorry specimen of about a pound!

Long afterwards I heard that the parcel had gone off unopened to my friend's friend, who, I suppose, had the somewhat unusual privilege of dining on a dace weighing 1 pound. The story reminds me that one of the 5-pounders mentioned before also met with a mishap. This was a fish of 1 pound $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, and it was caught in very hot weather. By the time it reached the taxidermist it was found to have burst, and nothing could be done with it. That is why my glass case only holds four dace, and not five. I believe that this experience is not isolated, and it points to the need

for handling big dace very speedily in great heat, if you want to have them preserved.

I will take the rudd next because, like its immediate predecessors in this catalogue, it is a fly-taker. Its food is in general much the same as that of the roach, but I suspect the rudd of some little tendency to cannibalism, or at any rate of a greater partiality for flesh food than the roach has. Rudd are more inclined to take worms in summer than roach, which is one way of judging their taste.

Though rudd have many points of resemblance to the roach, in habit they are perhaps more akin to the chub, and have something of that fish's general "robustness" of demeanour and appetite, if I may so express it. Like the chub in summer, they are often to be found nearer the surface than the bottom of the water. Like the chub, they are fond of large mouthfuls, and, like the chub, they take an artificial fly with cordiality. I regard them as one of the most valuable of our fishes from the sportsman's point of view, and it is a pity that they are not more widely spread over the kingdom.

In England rudd are rather rare. The Norfolk Broads are their chief stronghold, and outside Norfolk the only river I know which holds them in any quantity is the Great Ouse. Isolated lakes here and there, such as Ravensthorpe Reservoir, near Northampton, and Slapton Ley, in Devonshire, have a reputation for rudd.

On the whole, I should say that they are more suited to lakes than rivers. In Ireland the big lakes contain great quantities of rudd, which are usually known there as roach. Roach proper do not occur in the Green Isle.

I do not know to what limit of size rudd will grow in favourable circumstances, but they certainly reach a bigger average weight than roach. Two-pounders are not uncommon, and 3-pounders have been caught here and there. Probably the tales of 4-pounders that you hear in Norfolk are not without some foundation. But for ordinary mortals a rudd over 2½ pounds may be considered worthy of a glass case, and one of ½ pound worthy of a place in the basket.

Bream come next on the list, and with them we come to the fishes that take no heed of flies. In the last chapter I mentioned the capture of a bream on a fly as a remarkable occurrence, and I do not think I ever heard of more than two or three other instances of the same thing. To catch bream you must turn your attention to the bottom of the water, and remember that these fish do all their feeding there. Bream have healthy appetites, are big fish, and consort in large companies, so they need a great deal of ground-bait. I take it that they are not very particular in the matter of food, and they are always bracketed in my mind with pigs. Somehow, when I know that a shoal

of bream is busy in a swim in front of me, I expect to hear squeaking and grunting.

There are, we are told, two kinds of bream, the white and the bronze. The white bream are known as "bream flats" or "tin plates," and are otherwise disrespectfully spoken of. They seldom grow to more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds, and they are a great nuisance to the fisherman. They have, I suppose, some other object in existence, but I do not know what it is.

The bronze bream is a better fish, not ill-described by its name, and it grows to a considerable size. A 2-pounder is worth keeping, 3-pounders are common, and 4-pounders in some districts are not rare. I say "in some districts," because in others, though plenty of fish up to $3\frac{1}{2}$ or $3\frac{3}{4}$ pounds may be caught, a 4-pounder is very unusual. This is the case on some of the Norfolk Broads. Perhaps bream reach a greater weight in running water than in still. Bigger fish are caught in the tidal portions of the Norfolk rivers than in the Broads. The Ancholme, Lea, Colne, and Warwickshire Avon, sometimes yield, and certainly contain, bream up to 7 pounds or more. An occasional big one of over 6 pounds is reported from the Thames. And there are, I believe, very big bream in Ireland. I have never come across anything of much more than 6 pounds myself, and I should regard such a fish as well worthy of a glass case. The biggest on record seems to be one of $9\frac{1}{4}$ pounds.

Barbel are like bream in being determined bottom-feeders, and like rudd in being confined to a few districts. In fact, they seem to be found only in the watersheds of the Thames and Trent. They feed on larvæ, snails, and similar things, and possibly on vegetable matter. To tell the truth, very little is known about the habits of barbel, because they live mostly in deep water and cannot often be observed. Unlike all the other fish so far mentioned, they live in rivers only, and are not found in lakes. The chub, by the way, also prefers rivers, but seems to be able to live in still water if it has been put into it.

Barbel grow to a large size, probably as much as 20 pounds, but very few over 12 pounds have been caught by anglers. Anything over 9 pounds is considered worthy of a glass case. The Thames and its tributary the Kennet seem to hold bigger barbel than the Trent. Nothing under 4 pounds is worth keeping when you are definitely fishing for barbel, though a 3-pounder sometimes comes as an exciting incident in a day's roach-fishing, and may perhaps be kept as a trophy. Barbel, like chub, are often caught on spinning-baits in Thames weir-pools early in the summer. They move up into the strong water after spawning, and perhaps are then of slightly cannibal tendency. They are even more of a disappointment to the trout-fisher than chub, since they are both bigger and stronger, and therefore still more deceptive. The most

striking thing about the barbel to my mind is the uncertainty of its behaviour. No man knows whether he will get sport, not only on a given day, but even in a given season. As a rule, a hot summer and low water seem to be the best prognostications for the angler. When there is any sport at all, it is likely to be very good indeed.

Very much the same thing applies to tench, the next fish to be mentioned. They are very uncertain about feeding, and may give very good sport or none at all. Entirely bottom feeders, they seem to take worms as well as anything, but they will also sometimes bite at paste and other roach baits. They are by nature more inclined to still water than to streams, and they have no objection to mud. In rivers you will generally find them where the water is sluggish and the mud deep. They have the power of existing, and even thriving, in quite small ponds, where no other fish, except, perhaps, carp, could endure to be. Such places sometimes provide amusing and unexpected sport.

A 2-pound tench is a respectable fish, and a 4-pounder is a big one. A 5-pounder should certainly be preserved. If you catch a 6-pounder let the fact be generally known; 7 and 8-pounders are perhaps possibilities, but I do not myself feel hopeful of seeing a tench over 7 pounds in my own landing-net.

Carp are the biggest of our freshwater fish, except pike, and they are also the hardest to catch after they

have reached years of discretion. Their food is doubtless as varied as that of other members of the carp family, but the angler has considerable difficulty in suiting their tastes. In theory they will take anything from a lobworm to a boiled potato, but in practice they will usually take nothing at all.

This applies, of course, more to the old and big ones. Small carp, from ½ to 1½ pounds or so, will sometimes bite freely. But when you aim at fish of 4 pounds and more, you must be prepared for plenty of disappointment. Any carp of 7 pounds may be considered a big one for a river, and anything over 10 pounds is big for a lake. About 20 pounds is the limit so far reached by anglers, but I think there must be carp of as much as 30 pounds in some of our old lakes. They live to a great age; they are never caught, or so seldom as hardly to matter, so it is difficult to see any reason why they should not reach such a weight.

Smaller kinds of carp are the crucian and the goldfish. The crucian carp hardly counts as a sporting fish, for it seldom reaches a weight of more than 1 pound, though I have heard of a specimen of about 4 pounds. The goldfish, of course, is still less a sporting fish, but in favourable circumstances it will grow to something of a size. I once caught goldfish up to 1¼ pounds, or a little more, in a pond in Kent.

The golden orfe, which I have mentioned before, grows to a weight of 3 or 4 pounds, but it is hardly

worth considering. There is just a chance that in a river like the Thames an angler might catch one which had escaped from some private ornamental pond in time of flood. I suppose the same thing might be said of the golden tench, a handsome fish, of which I myself have only seen specimens in the Zoological Gardens.

Among the curiosities which an angler might some day come upon is the zander, or pike-perch, of which small specimens have been introduced from Europe from time to time. It is like an elongated perch, with a head and array of teeth more suited to the pike, and in its native region, the Danube district, it reaches a weight of some 20 pounds. In recent years two or three of these fish have been caught in different places, having evidently escaped from some private waters. The specimens have been very small, but supposing that any of them are still at large they are bound to grow, and some day, perhaps, a big one will astonish and perhaps alarm a worthy son of Izaak.

The black bass of America is a splendid sporting fish which has been introduced once or twice. An interesting account of the most serious effort with it may be found in the "Pike and Coarse Fish" volume of the Badminton Library (the older editions). So far as I know, there are no black bass at large in our waters now; I wish there were.

Another interesting fish with which some small

acclimatizing experiment has been made is the wels, the big catfish of Central Europe. A specimen of about 30 pounds was caught in the Suffolk Stour a good many years ago, and that seems to have been all the result of the introduction. I do not know that we need regret this, for the wels is hideous beyond words, and though he reaches a weight of several hundred pounds, he is nothing of a sportsman. He feeds at night, and requires night-line rather than fishing-rod tactics. He is said to be fond of children—as food. In fact, his only merit is that he is the biggest fresh-water fish in Europe.

The sturgeon may, I suppose, be regarded as a coarse fish, though he is only a migrant. They apparently catch him in Russia on hooks and lines, so if you ever come across a sturgeon in a convenient place, it might be worth your while to fish for him with a bunch of lobworms, or the entrails of a chicken, or something of that sort. He has a queer little mouth, but I suppose he is capable of taking a bait. German writers speak of spinning for sturgeon, but that seems to me rather an optimistic proceeding. Personally, I should leger for one with lobworms and a wire trace. But I do not advise anybody to go sturgeon-fishing as a general thing; these fish only get into our rivers once in a way, and when they do, steps are usually taken to "rouse the neighbourhood," and lobworms have small chance when pitted against nets, and guns, and harpoons, and the

other apparatus of sturgeon-fishing as understood in England.

One or two other migrants are worth mentioning. There is, for example, the flounder, an extremely merry and humorous cousin of the plaice, which makes its way up some rivers far beyond the sphere of tidal influence. The sight of an impudent little flatfish pursuing your bait up to the very surface of the water is entertaining somehow—I don't quite know why. Perhaps it is the inadequacy of the tail on which the creature tries to stand. In the more or less salt water at the mouths of rivers, flounders grow to a good size—2½ or even 3 pounds—but you do not often find them much over ¾ pound higher up. Occasionally we used to get one in the Severn, at Tewkesbury, which would weigh nearly 1½ pounds. A worm is a thing which your fresh-water flounder cannot resist, but he will come for anything that looks edible, and some have even been caught on a fly.

Another migrant of which we used to see something on the Severn was the twaite-shad, a member of the herring family, which enters fresh water to spawn. It used to run to 2 or 3 pounds, and would take a worm, a small spinning-bait, or a fly. I believe that these fish get into the lower parts of the Teme, and there give a good deal of sport. I have seen them caught in the cleaching-nets on the lower Wye also. But shad (there is another kind, the allis-shad) are not so impor-

tant in England as they are on the Continent, and they do not seem to run up many of our rivers. They can scarcely, therefore, be considered to matter much to the angler.

Another unimportant though interesting fish is the burbot. It is unimportant because it is rare, occurring, apparently, only in a few rivers of the East Coast. It is interesting because it is the only member of the cod family which lives in fresh water. One is caught by an angler now and then, but it is a rare fish, and, I should say, deserves to be put into a glass case when taken. It appears to run up to 3 or 4 pounds, and is said to take worms or small fish. I have had no experience of it myself, and have never seen one outside an aquarium.

I suppose that either lampreys or lamperns might conceivably take an angler's bait and add to his catalogue of curiosities, but here, again, I have had no experience. Lamperns, however, may often be seen and caught in small-meshed landing-nets if the observer wishes. I proved that as a boy. I have seen them in many different streams since without feeling any irresistible yearning to catch them. I class them with leeches as creatures that I can be without.

There remain the small fry, in the following order of importance: Gudgeon, bleak, minnow, loach, bullhead, stickleback. The two at the end of the list have a certain sporting value to the angler in embryo, and I

will not deny that only a few months ago I might have been seen, in company with a certain eminent writer of leading articles, endeavouring to capture a stout bullhead among his native stones. *Ehcu Postume*—we did not catch him. In truth, Master Bullhead has comparative immunity against the wiles of middle age. There is an aching of the back and a stiffness at the knees. . . . Still more recently, in the same respectable company, I was to be observed watching sticklebacks with covetous eye. But we could not find a worm anyhow, dig as we, or rather I (my friend is a born organizer), might.

The other small fry are chiefly notable as baits for bigger fish. Three of them, gudgeon, bleak, and minnow, may be caught on rod and line, or at any rate on a hook. The loach, as all well-informed persons know, may be speared. You take off your shoes and stockings and pursue loaches down the crystal Lynn, until you come to the gliding stream of Badgeworthy Water, up which you make your adventurous way, having "very comely sport of loaches, trout, and minnows," and at the end there is the great dark water-slide and beauteous little Lorna waiting at the top. The loach is a fish much honoured by one of our greatest writers, but I cannot believe that it ever reached a weight of ½ pound, either in the Lowman, hard by Peter Blundell's school, or anywhere else. The biggest I ever saw was about 5 or 5½ inches.

I have seen minnows very nearly as big as that, especially in the small stream that runs through Cirencester, and I have seen an occasional gudgeon up to some $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Bleak very rarely attain to a similar size. Gudgeon and minnows take a worm better than anything, and bleak are fondest of a maggot or a housefly, used on a very small hook.

Just a word should, perhaps, be said as to the seasons at which the more important fish enumerated in this chapter are most readily caught. Some few of them are ready to feed in warm weather and cold alike; these are roach, dace, chub, and perch. Others are seldom caught in cold weather—carp, bream, barbel, rudd, eel. The pike will take in summer as in winter, but is regarded as a winter fish, because it is then in best condition. The tench feeds best in summer and autumn, but sometimes wakes up surprisingly in February and early March, just before the close season.

And now we had better get to our fishing.

CHAPTER IV

THE WEIR-POOL

The season is now nearly a week old, the sun shines, and human nature cannot bear it any longer. We will go and begin fishing at once. No, not for roach. That means making ground-bait, and besides they're not in condition. No, nor fly-fishing either. That is too strenuous, and the chub aren't in their quarters yet. A day in the little punt on the weir-pool, that is the proper beginning. With a red and green float. All right—white and blue if you prefer it. Yes, I've got plenty of worms. Oh, anything we can catch. A barbel or two if we're lucky, and anyhow some perch.

* * * * *

Tie her nose up to that post and I'll fix her stern. Now she won't wobble. There's nothing so annoying as a boat which sways in the current, especially if you're legering. It pulls the bait all over the place, and even if you get a bite you probably won't feel it.

No, I don't think 11 feet is too much for your rod, especially here where there are 8 or 9 feet of water. Your Thames fishermen told you so? Very likely, but

even Thames fishermen don't know everything. Take my advice and don't be "put upon" by the professionals. If we were only going to leger I should say a 9 or 10 foot rod, with a bit of give in it, yet sharp in the strike; but for float-fishing I prefer a longer one. Suppose you are fishing with a float in 14 feet of water, and only have a 9-foot rod, how are you going to land your fish? Stand on the seat? I beg you'll do no such thing. *I'm* not going in after you. There's a precious strong undertow in these weir-pools, and I wouldn't give much for your chances in your clothes. Oh, you'll be all right so long as you sit still.

Fig. 10.

Yes, I should have the bigger float, the long cork one; it will carry two of those split bullets. In a place like this you want to have a big float and plenty of it showing, because there are all sorts of little currents and backwashes that are apt to drown it. Yes, that's weighted about right. Five feet of finest undrawn gut for the cast and a No. 7 hook will do all you want. A lob-worm—no, I wouldn't thread it. Put it on like this.

Fig. 11.

If you thread it, it dies too quickly. Sometimes it's a

good thing to hook it simply in the middle as I'm doing. Then it can crawl about if it's on the bottom, and look active if it isn't. Yes, I've plumbed the depth, and it's just about 8 feet all over the eddy. Put your float so that the hook will drag along the bottom 18 inches below the bullets.

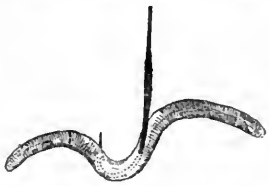

Fig. 12.

It doesn't much matter which you do. If the float travels round and round the eddy, you cover more water, of course, but if you hold your rod still and keep the float in one place, I think you're just as likely to get bites. Besides, it's less trouble. You might have the float 6 inches deeper for that, so that the worm will be on the bottom.

Like seaweed? Yes, that's the smell of the river. You only get it in the weir-pools and locks. It's the most refreshing thing in the world on a very hot day—the very odour of coolness. Probably that mossy stuff there—silkweed we call it—is responsible for the smell. It's always being broken into little pieces by the falling water, and when the river begins to get low it is left high and dry, and then it dies and decays. The odour of decay is not always unpleasant. Take lavender, for instance. After all, what we call decay the gods call change; there

> "never blows so red
> The rose as where some buried Cæsar bled."

In the lock, perhaps, you notice this scent of the river more even than in the weir-pool. The gradual sinking from the sunlight and the hot perfume of hay a-carrying into the cool dank depths quickens one's faculties of perception. As a child I used to think the passage through the lock the most wonderful thing in the world. And one could almost always see a small perch close to the wall. Like a crypt? Well, I like the smell of a crypt; it is the essence of cathedrals, the odour of sanctity.

Yes, that was a bite. There goes the rod-top, jag, jag again. No, don't leave it; pick the rod up and yield to the fish as it tugs. It's a perch for certain, and if he feels too much resistance he'll leave the worm and go away. There, he's at it again. You can just feel the tremor that passes up along the line and down the rod to your hand. Humour your fish, and keep the line just so taut that you can feel him, but he can't feel you, yielding a little all the time. You ought always to be ready to do this whenever you are "tight-corking," as we call it—that is to say, when the float hangs in the stream straight below the rod, and the line again hangs downstream of the float. You see, the fish feels the rod almost at once in this position, because he's pulling almost directly on it. When you're fishing with a worm you ought always to ease to the fish.

There goes the float, well under. Now, up with your rod gently but firmly. You've got him. Handle him

cannily. No, he won't break you if you don't try pulley-hauley. Follow him about with the rod. No, no, not *in* the water. Keep the point up, and enough pressure on to bend the top a bit. Can't follow him? Why, you've got 11 feet of rod and 3 feet of arm, and you can lean forward another 2 feet! What more do you want? The more you keep the point of the rod over your fish, the less he'll try to run out of the pool. The reel? Oh, that's for emergencies. Never depend on your reel when you can conduct a battle with your rod. Men have landed 5-pound trout before now with no reel at all and a line of single hair tied to the top of their roach-poles. The whole secret lies in keeping above your fish. Catastrophes come when the fish gets beyond the upward strain. The roach-pole men call that being "pointed."

That is where the reel comes in, because if a big fish insists on running a long way, of course you must let him have line to run with. But oftener than not he won't want to, especially in deep water like this. The shallower the water, the more they are inclined to run. But, anyhow, never let them have an inch of line if you can help it.

Yes, he's nearly done now. I can see him, a very pretty perch—a brave fighter. I bet you can feel those stabs twanging along the line to your hand. Now then, wind in a foot or two and float him down over the net. There he is! Three-quarters of a pound as near

as need be. Up with the lid and pop him into the well. Excellent things these wells. They save the life of many a brave fish, because if you've only got one or two medium-sized fish when the day's done, you don't want to take them home, as they won't do you any credit; and if you've got a hundred big ones, equally you don't want to take them all home, because you're not a "fish-hog." (Yes, that's American—expressive things generally are; they don't talk English, but their language has its points.) Quite four-fifths of most Thames punt-anglers' catches get returned to the river for reasons like that, and it does everybody credit and the river good. Of course, the well ought not to have too many fish put into it, or they knock themselves about, and then probably get fungus. It ought to be emptied from time to time if you are getting very good sport.

What? Where? Yes, by Jove! I *do* see him. There he goes round that iron stay. The water's not more than 4 feet there, but he doesn't seem to mind the punt. Great red brute! I dare say he's 8 or 9 pounds. There he goes over the sill and back into the deep water. Take one of the worms? He might, but these big barbel are uncertain creatures. It isn't often that you get one "promiscuous-like."

Another perch? Good! have him in. No he shows silver—it's a roach. A ½-pounder, and in quite good condition. No, it's quite true: roach don't take worms well in summer, except in ponds. But you are always

likely to catch one or two in a weir-pool, especially early in the season. Perhaps the oxygen in a place like this makes them hungrier than they would be in the open stream. There's more oxygen in the weir-pool than elsewhere, because of the falling water, and that's why such a lot of fish come up into it after the spawning season. When you are run down you go to the seaside or to the mountains. It's just the same—what men of science call anthropomorphology. I only found out what that was the other day, which is why I'm telling you now.

Why don't they all stay in the weir-pool for ever? Because there's more food in other parts of the river—more weeds, and shrimps, and snails, and flies, and things like that. So they go back to find them.

> "The mountain sheep were sweeter,
> But the valley sheep were fatter;
> We therefore deemed it meter
> To carry off the latter."

Do you know the history of Ionia? It is a tale of mountain race after mountain race migrating from the hungry uplands to the fat plains and staying there. The story of fishes in the Thames is just the same. Yes, of course some stay in the weir-pools. There are also people on mountains. But most Scotsmen are in London.

My fault? You had a terrific bite, and you tried to play him with the rod, and he's broken you? And it

was the 9-pound barbel! My good sir, I didn't tell you to grasp the rod with both hands and hold on, with your eyes starting out of your head! If you'd let a little line start out of your reel it would have been more to the purpose. *Est modus in rebus.* It is the part of a proper angler to be ready for these emergencies.

Never mind; put on a new hook, and let me comfort you by calling your attention to that punt away down there. Yes, they are barbel-fishers. They've spent pounds and pounds in lobworms from Nottingham, and they've baited that swim for days. Why from Nottingham? Because that's where most of the lobworms come from. It's a regular industry, with master-wormers and sub-wormers. There was a strike last summer, and nobody could buy any lobworms in London at all. Yes, it seems quite right, as you are about to suggest, that a wormer should turn.

Oh no; you needn't buy them unless you want to. You go out on to the lawn after dark with a candle and a bucket, and you see the worms lying on the grass and grab them. It's very difficult, because they can slip into the ground again like a flash, but it's not bad fun. You are really expert when you can grab a worm with each hand and not break either. Yes, rather slimy, and it makes the back ache. Keep them in? Moss. It makes them tough and active. It puts them into training, but is apt to train them a bit too fine.

and then they die. I like a tub of moist earth with moss on top.

About the barbel-fishers? Oh yes, as I was saying, they've thrown in thousands of lobworms, and they started fishing at daybreak, and they've finished all their beer, and they haven't had a bite. How do I know? Well, I don't precisely know; I hazard what is called a shrewd guess. I've been barbel-fishing myself, you see. Oh, well, now and then, but never a really big day. You want to stick to it for that, and lobworms cost ten shillings a thousand. Besides, all our ideas about barbel are wrong, I'm sure.

Our method of barbel-fishing is to train the fish to take exotic foods, and then depend on the false taste which they have acquired. Worms are exotic to them when you throw them in in thousands in hot summer weather. Perhaps the barbel will acquire a taste for them, perhaps not. Then there is greaves. "Are" greaves? Possibly; I don't know whether it is singular or plural, like the sub-editor who was heard to say to the sporting editor, "Here's two sticks about Keats. What *are* Keats?" And the sporting editor was not sure, but said he'd ask the vet.

You get greaves from the tallow-chandler, and I believe it is a residuum from tallow-chandling. I don't know any more about it, but I used to go and hunt for gentles in an old-fashioned chandler's establishment when I was a boy, and I can remember the smell to this

day. They were beautiful gentles, nearly as big as wasp-grubs. I expect modern science has done away with that sort of thing, but I associate greaves with the old, old smell, and that's why I don't use it. Obviously it is not a food natural to barbel, and the experts say that if you throw in too much the fish soon get sick of it. I don't wonder!

What ought we to do? Obviously we ought to fish for barbel with the things that they eat normally. That's the trouble: we don't know what they eat, not really. And yet they must eat a great deal, because they grow so big, and they are very numerous, so we ought to be able to catch a great many. If I had a private barbel swim, I'd make all sorts of experiments. A mill-pool on the Kennet would be the ideal place, because the Kennet water is very clear, and you can often see right to the bottom. I believe water-snails, and fresh-water shrimps, and things like that, are the barbel's natural food. The trouble is putting them on a hook. Shrimps are tiny little things, and barbel hooks have to be pretty stout in the wire. Perhaps you could use some sticky stuff like seccotine, and simply stick four or five shrimps to the hook. Snails might be tied on with fine thread. Frenchmen use aniseed cake for many kinds of fish, and they tie it to their hooks with thread. They call it "la noquette." We don't know everything about fishing in England, though we think we do.

If we got elvers in the Thames nowadays, I believe they would be as good a bait for barbel as anything. It might be worth someone's while to get some from the Severn and try them. Chub take them ravenously in the Severn, but that river has no barbel. I should think elvers would travel well enough in damp weeds or moss very lightly packed. I seem to remember that they died when crowded in water in a bait-can.

Another perch? Well, you've made sure of your breakfast, anyhow. Have them cooked in their jackets. Cooks have a sort of idea that it is their business to remove the scales before cooking the fish. It's an absurd waste of time. We might just as well go and remove Wittenham Tump yonder with a spade before walking over it. Besides, perch are all the better for being cooked in their scales, and when they are cooked flesh and skin are very easily parted.

Two bites, and no result except half the worm gone each time! Perhaps they were from dace. Or perhaps the perch are just playing with the bait; they often do if they're not keen, and they've not been keen so far. Try the Pennell tackle. Not got any? Why, make it. Take two of these eyed hooks and tie them on to a strand of gut as shown in Fig. 13. Yes, 3 inches apart for these big lobworms. For small worms, don't have them quite so far apart, and use very small hooks. Put the worm on with one hook in the head and the other near the tail. Then, whether the fish takes

the head or the tail, he'll find a hook in it. Perch generally take the head, but if they are just playing, they will sometimes tweak the tail. Dace generally go for the head and roach for the tail.

Got him? A dace, as I thought. You can see *he's* in fine condition. Dace are the earliest spawners of all coarse fish, and they recover sooner in consequence. No, he's not worth putting in the well. He's only

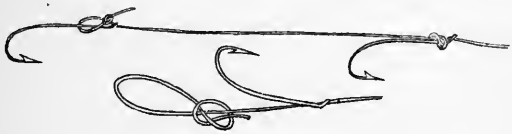

Fig. 13.

7 inches long, so put him back. Ten inches is the measure of a large dace in the Thames, and you don't get too many of that size.

Yet another abortive bite. Probably it is a perch this time. I'll show you how to catch that fellow. Raise the point of the rod and pull the worm slowly up towards the surface. Now let it sink slowly. Now pull it slowly along in a slanting direction. There! do you feel a check? Let him have it. See the line travelling out into the stream of its own accord. Now strike gently. Got him! It's only a little thing, but that doesn't matter. You've learnt one of the most valuable secrets of perch-fishing, and that is the use of a moving bait. It is not always necessary, of course,

but when the fish are not very keen, it is a sure way of catching one or two more.

Lunch-time? Yes, it is about. No, I've no particular theories about lunch, except that it ought to be a bigger affair in a punt than on the bank. You are doing less, therefore you must eat more. Yes, perfectly logical because it's English, like Sunday and four square meals between naps. Church? Of course, but the sermon tends to compose the mind and close the eyes. I'm not blaming anyone. Since you press me, I will say that marmalade sandwiches are one of the most valuable ingredients of a fishing lunch. They tend to reduce both hunger and thirst at the same time. An apple also. Sometimes my lunch consists of a piece of shortbread and a packet of chocolate. To tell the truth, I don't regard lunch as of very great importance. The sensation of hunger about one o'clock can be allayed by a very small meal. Tea is the important thing, and you should have it quite early, from 3.30 to 4 p.m. Fishes have ceased to feed by about that time in summer, and begin again later. Yes, presently we will move over to the lock island and have some.

Too proud to have some of that pie? Far from it. And I'll thank you for a lettuce also. Yes, a roll is more appetizing than bread. No, it's all right; here are both salt and mustard, and the butter's in that little pot. Well, since you have got two bottles of lager beer, it would be a pity to waste them. There is

another tin in the basket. Oh, cheese-cakes and tartlets! All excellent good. Lucullus will now lunch with himself.

* * * * *

Yes, it is sadly true; one does not feel so energetic after lunch. The sun also, as you observe, is hot. Very well, we'll drop down into the backwater and tie up under the shade.

* * * * *

FIG. 14.—THE THAMES STYLE.

Why aren't we fixed across the stream like those other people? Well, personally, I don't know how to make a rypeck stand upright in solid gravel—do you? I thought not. It's an art which I've never mastered. Certainly, to be a complete Thames fisherman one ought to be able to do it, because otherwise one cannot fish in the Thames style. The Thames style doubtless has its advantages. It is less trouble to let the float travel downstream away from you and then to draw it back to the punt than to throw it

in above you and then lift it out when it has got below you.

But it has disadvantages also, in my opinion, especially when you are fishing for rather shy biters like roach, which eject a bait on the least provocation. At the end of an ordinary Thames swim the hook is a long way from the point of the rod, and you have to strike rather forcibly; also, as you are striking upstream, there is a risk of pulling the hook out of the fish's mouth. When you are fishing in the other way, with the float travelling parallel with the punt, I think striking is more likely to be effective, as you are in much closer touch with your hook the whole time. Yes, towards the end of the swim you are also striking upstream, but not at nearly so acute an angle.

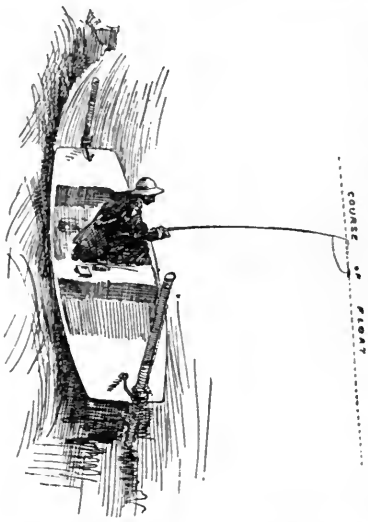

FIG. 15.—THE PARALLEL STYLE.

Bites? I didn't know you wanted bites as well as shade. You do? Well, then you'd better fish for gudgeon. You're not likely to catch much else here.

It's too shallow for barbel, and rather clear for us to expect anything else. Put on a small hook—yes, that No. 11 will do—and bait with one of these brandlings. Fish just on the bottom. All right, but don't lose it. Some people have an idea that plummets are made to be lost. They are a convenience, but not a necessity. You can always make sure of the depth by shifting your float up or down. When you are too deep it drags. All you have to do is to reduce the depth a little until it just doesn't drag.

Fig. 16.—The Plummet and its Use.

Not to put too fine a term upon it, brandlings come from manure-heaps. You find them sometimes in leaf-mould, but I think in that case there must have been a substratum of manure to encourage them. Unpleasant? Really, you provoke me to say that this is a finicking age. Full of humbug, too! People don't mind steeping their souls in all the garbage that passes for advanced literature or drama, but they shudder at the idea of picking a harmless brandling out of a ripe manure-heap. Is it not always possible to wash your hands when they seem to require it? But it isn't so easy

to have a moral and intellectual bath. It seems to me that strong formalin solution . . . Yes, you're right—I digress.

To return to the brandlings. It's a queer thing, but you won't find them in all manure-heaps. Some are too young and moist, some too old and dry. You want your heap to be just ripe—that is to say, rich, binding well together, and reverting in pleasant fashion to Mother Earth. Sometimes you turn over quite a lot of it with the fork before you find any worms, and then just as despair grips you, behold there is a noble colony, lustrous and luscious. It is certainly one of the minor triumphs to come upon a store of brandlings after much fruitless digging. Picking them up as fast as your hand can fly from ground to tin is pleasurable. Human beings love picking things very fast, especially wild things—nuts, blackberries, mushrooms, and so on.

As a child one yearned for praise. I remember a lane where the violets used to grow in March, and where I used to pick like fun. Once I gained great credit for getting a whole bunch of white ones, which were rather rare in that district. But they always applauded me, which made me persevere instead of fishing for newts in the pond or small eels in the ditches. I have an idea now that I saved the grown-ups a good deal of stooping, and that therefore they said I was an able and diligent boy. But the kind sayings were welcome, and I am not sure that they would not be

welcome now. If, for example, I was picking blackberries, I think I should be gratified at being applauded for zeal. With regard to brandlings, one has to be content, of course, with the applause of one's own conscience.

No, one does not grow out of all childish things, thank Heaven! You, I observe, now want to be praised for having caught eight gudgeon. Nine? It's pretty well considering, though people often catch ninety without being puffed up. But they rake for them. Raking is a species of ground-baiting. You have a huge iron rake on a long handle, and you stir up the gravel above the swim. This colours the water and, no doubt, dislodges all sorts of small creatures of which the fish are fond. These get carried down by the stream, and the gudgeon collect to feed on them. I don't know who first discovered this dodge, but he must have been an ingenious fellow. Presently we will angle for a big perch with one of those gudgeon.

Caught an odd fish? Let me look. Oh, that's what we used to call a "daddy ruffe" in Gloucestershire. They call it a pope on the Thames, I think. So far as I know, it is of no use at all. It never grows big enough to eat. Perhaps it is designed as an encouragement to young anglers. It is a bold biter, and the veriest novice could hardly fail to catch it, if he fished in the right places. Like a little spotted perch? That describes it exactly.

Odd that the idea should have occurred to us both simultaneously. We will at once put across to the island and have some.

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Yes, another cup, please. Milk in first. People *will* not realize that it makes all the difference to put the milk in first. It gives the tea quite a different and a much better taste. I am no chemist, but it is evident to me that the two processes of pouring hot tea into cold milk and cold milk into hot tea must give quite opposite results. Women nearly always say that they cannot measure the quantity of milk required till they see what colour the tea turns. That, I take it, betrays either laziness or incapacity to grasp essential truths. Really noble women, however, put the milk in first, without argumentative evasion. Men always do when they have thought about it.

No, I do not agree that it is a trifle unworthy of our consideration on a day's fishing. Few things concern the angler more than tea, and it is therefore of importance that he should have it at its best. Whisky? He that will to Cupar of course maun to Cupar, and no doubt whisky is all very well for those who benefit by it. Personally, I only value it as a febrifuge after getting very wet. For a mild stimulant on a long day's fishing give me tea. It refreshes not only the body, but the brain, and you need an active brain for fishing. Whisky, so far as I have been able to observe,

stimulates the body at the expense of the brain. But the two together have their uses when you are very exhausted or have been out all day in heavy rain. Do you know Barry Pain's imitation of Burns in "The Poets at Tea":

> "Weel, gin ye speir, I'm no inclined,
> Whusky or tay, to state my mind
> For ane or ither;
> For, gin I tak the first, I'm fou,
> And, gin the next, I'm dull as you.
> Mix a' thegither."

There is perhaps some value in compromise here as elsewhere.

Suave mari magno. . . . Is there anything pleasanter in life than to sit, refreshed with tea, on a shady lock island, and to watch one's fellow-creatures struggling along on the bosom of Father Thames? Nowhere can people acquire such a look of heated exhaustion as on the river. See those two determined men, whose object is to get certainly to Abingdon, possibly to Oxford, ere nightfall. They take their pleasures arduously, that kind. Not that I deny a pleasure in your steady ten-mile pull. Exercise in itself is a joy, with the straining of muscles and the consciousness of strength applied. Then there is the delight of rhythm, four sculls moving in exact unison, and the skiff leaping responsive to every stroke. And the lip-lap of the water, the jewelled drops falling from the feathered blades, the masterful shout of "Lo-ock!"—all these and other

things are to be reckoned up. But chiefly there is the eating up of miles. Men love to eat up miles.

Equally there is no place where people can look so cool and comfortable as on the Thames. Look at that Canadian canoe and its freight! They have come, perhaps, from Shillingford since lunch—about two miles in three hours, so there is no reason why they should look overworked. But they are ready for their tea, as all decent people should be. Without wishing to institute comparisons, I am quite sure that tea poured out by those pretty hands would be superlative. I have a weakness for that particular combination of dark eyelashes and grey-blue eyes. The hair too. . . . Yes, yes, let us be going. Still, I'm sure she'd pour the milk in first, and he's a lucky fellow. Sentimental? Well, well! *Et ego in Arcadia vixi.* The river serves other purposes besides those of the angler, and who are we to question? I seem to remember that you also . . . but no matter.

Ah! the barbel still rankles? Have at another, then. We'll try the run between the rushes and the corner of the island. It's deep, gravelly, and streamy, the combination best suited for barbel. We'll fasten at the corner of the rushes and cast our legers down into the deep hole. Frankly, I have not much hope of catching one, but the swim is baited sometimes, so it is just worth trying.

This is the tackle I prefer. The traditional Thames

leger-lead is a flat thing threaded on to a strand of gimp, which is fastened in the middle of the gut-trace. I don't like the combination of gut and gimp, somehow, and I would sooner have my lead on the reel-line. This is what is called a paternoster lead, but it does very well for legering. The line runs through the ring very freely, which is an advantage. A No. 6 hook and a lobworm hooked by the middle and you're ready. Pull a dozen yards off your reel and coil it on the bottom of the punt as you pull it off. Now lay your rod across the punt and reverse the coils, so that the

FIG. 17.—LEGER-TACKLE.
A to B = 24 to 36 inches.

bottom one consists of the line nearest the reel, and the top one of line nearest the first ring on the rod. Now pick up the rod and swing the lead back, holding the line meanwhile in your left hand. Now swing the lead forward, let the line go, and you will see the bait travel away to the desired spot. As it goes, the line is picked up from the bottom of the punt coil by coil, until a click from the reel shows that it is all out. Let the lead reach the bottom and then tighten till you can just feel it. When, and if, a bite comes, you will feel that too.

This ability to cast a bait out from the coil is a

necessary accomplishment, but it is very easily learnt. With a small amount of practice you will be able to throw a ½-ounce lead 30 yards, which is as much as is generally necessary. A heavy pike-bait can, in favourable circumstances, be thrown 60 yards, but you cannot make much of a job of fishing at so great a distance. The other way of casting is from the reel, as to which it is too late in the day to say anything now. Perhaps another time. It is rather a depressing subject. I acquired what small skill in it I possess in that meadow yonder, and woundily I smote myself with leads, horribly I involved myself in tangles, gravely I imperilled my future by bad language, during several hours of two days. At length I emerged victorious.

But my friend Polylogus picked up the knack of it in half an hour, and is of the opinion that there is nothing much in it. True, I was at his elbow, while at my elbow there was no one, but even so it appears to me that things are not evenly distributed. Polylogus hardly had to swear at all, and it does not seem right.

Yes, it's a slow game, this legering, when bites do not come. It is one of the poorest forms of fishing to my mind, because you're doing nothing and there's nothing to look at. When you've got a float to watch, there always seems to be a prospect of something happening immediately. And floats often bob in a hopeful way for no particular reason, or rather for no reason con-

nected with the hook. Very young fishes have a playful habit of butting at your float or rubbing themselves against it, and that sort of thing makes it bob. Often, moreover, I believe that older fish push against the gut cast as they cruise about at the bottom, and that, again, makes the float bob. Once or twice I have seen a pike or perch assault a fat cork float, which is a cheery spectacle. Then, again, a dragon-fly or a wasp will settle on it, and that is interesting. A float is a great dispeller of ennui.

Yes, that is what one *does* want, to have the curtain of water withdrawn for a brief space, and to see what fish lurk in those mysterious depths. If I have heard one man utter such a wish, I have heard a hundred. But I have never known their prayer answered in any way. The river always preserves its undisturbed reticence. Nay, not always. A day comes now and then when the water is very clear and the light at the proper angle, and then you may see a good deal, enough to fascinate you with the under-water world. It is a world of hill and valley, plain and grove, just like ours, and, on the whole, its inhabitants are not unlike us. They are perhaps a little more candid in their manner of devouring each other. They do not, so far as I know, talk about the laws of supply and demand, or promulgate doctrines about the survival of the fittest. Not that I blame us—far from it. If I am to be devoured, I would much rather have it done

tactfully by a minister with golden words in his rotund mouth. Socialists remind me of pike, which have no tact.

Hullo! you appear to have hooked something. A slow, dragging sort of bite? I don't know what it may be. A barbel generally gives two sharp tugs. Whatever it is, it is fighting well. Don't hurry it. There's lots of time. Yes, you were quite right to let the line off the reel then. You see, you are a long way from your fish, and it is in strongish water. Now then, reel it up. It's coming. I believe it *is* a barbel after all; I saw a gleam of reddish copper. Now I can see it, and it's only a small one—foul-hooked, I believe. Yes, there you are. See, it's hooked in the ventral fin. A 3-pounder or thereabouts. It illustrates what I was saying just now, about fish rubbing against the line, and it explains that dragging bite. The fish was rootling on the bottom, and got foul of the hook. Barbel often do that, and if you hook a big one on roach tackle in this way you think that the fight is going to last for ever. They are very strong fish, and when hooked foul are doubly strong, of course. All right, we'll put him in the well for the time being.

Trout? Well, the chance of a Thames trout in these days is not worth much to the casual fisherman. If you are on the river every day you may catch a few, but it's an uncertain game. Most of the big ones are well known, and are fished for by determined fellows

who grudge no amount of time and trouble to the pursuit. I have hooked three Thames trout in my time, landing one of them. And I once rose two beauties in this very pool with a salmon-fly. The trout I landed was between 7 and 8 inches long, and till I have very convincing proof to the contrary, I shall consider myself entitled to the fame of having caught the smallest Thames trout on record. I am not, I hope, a vain man, but I cling to my rights.

He was a funny little fish, and he lived in a funny little hole between two stones in the extreme right-hand corner of Benson weir-pool, where a small overflow of water from the main fall made a special little stream for him. I was fishing for perch with a worm, and had caught two or three in or close to this hole, when the little trout got hooked. I unhooked him, carried him to the quiet water of the open pool about 20 yards away, and placed him gently in. With a pleased wag of the tail he departed. Then I returned to my perch-fishing. Nothing happened to disturb my meditations for some time, and about a quarter of an hour later I was looking idly at the water, when I saw a small figure making its way up the rough water close to my feet. It was my small trout! He swam slowly but purposefully back to his little hole, and there, for all I know, he abides to this day.

Yes, you are right; I *do* feel an affection for that little fish, and, indeed, for all little fish. They are

cheery, companionable creatures, and I cannot explain the instinct which makes me want to catch them. It certainly seems illogical, and the humanitarians can make out a case which is specious on the face of it. But when you come to think seriously, you see that they are only playing on the surface of things. Sport is an intrinsic part of the world-scheme. The spider quite obviously takes an interest in his pursuit of a fly; the dog finds most of his life-pleasure in hunting rabbits; and even the rabbit feels a thrill at sight of a defenceless lettuce.

It is no good telling me that a lettuce does not feel. The principle of life is in a lettuce just as much as in you or me. And your humanitarian will eat lettuces without a pang, also nuts, and apples, and perhaps even eggs. On his own showing he is therefore a brutal fellow, since he is interfering with the principle of life, diverting it from its natural development. Were he to be consistent, he would eat nothing, drink nothing, and cease to breathe, for whatever he does he interferes. So he would die. And even in dying he would be in the wrong of it, since wilfully, of malice prepense, he would have interfered with the development of the life principle within himself. And that is obviously a wrong thing to do.

No; your rabid humanitarian who wants us to give up sport is in a cleft stick. There is no logical way for him to tread. Why, there is brave sport going on

within him every day and every hour of the day, even a kind of fishing! In the warm stream of his blood are great battles, leucocytes preying upon bacilli, bacilli marshalling their array against leucocytes. And he is powerless to prevent it. Even if he dies, what happens? His atoms continue the unending conflict, and the very worms that were himself turn one against another. I am profoundly sorry for the man who sees evil, and nothing but evil, in "Nature red in tooth and claw." There is nothing before him but the abyss of despair, for how can he endure to go on living in a scheme which makes him an unwilling instrument of red ruin and death so long as his entities exist, and that is so long as this physical world lasts?

This is no philosophy for us anglers, conscious as we are by frequent intercourse with Nature of a scheme which is intrinsically good and not evil. Look at that wagtail on the end of the beam there. It is a terrible instrument of destruction, that dainty, humorous, happy little thing. The amount of life which that monster destroys every day would make you shudder could you realize it in the true pessimistic spirit. But see if you can detect any signs of remorse in those bright eyes or that perky tail. No, of course you can't, because it is *right* that the bird should do these distressing things, just as it is right that you, living in this part of the world, should from time to time eat beef—beef being the result of the regrettable decease

of ox. The truth, as I see it, is that the life-principle in all created things is lent, not given, and it must in due course be returned to the hand that lent it. The manner of that return is not for creatures to choose, nor does it matter. We all—men, beasts, birds, fishes, plants—have it in common. How does it concern us in what way it passes from one to another, or which of us for the moment gives it outward form? Thinkers are too much obsessed with the idea of individualism, which is really quite another matter. If by a simple process you become an intrinsic portion of a crocodile, naturally you cease to be the handsome fellow who aforetime sat in this punt and wondered why he did not get any more bites. But you don't stop: you go on.

You think that *I* had better stop? Yes, you are right, and, in fact, I'm getting rather perplexed myself. The problem of the soul wants rather more attention than I have been able to give it so far. A million years hence, if we can then conveniently discuss things . . . But there is one more thing with regard to this humanitarianism. It is evidently meant that we should be responsible for the divergence of the vital principle—that is to say, for death in one form or another. But I grant importance in our mental attitude. There must be no malice. We must not desire to kill simply for the sake of killing, because that reacts on our own natures, besides causing more death than Nature requires.

It would be evil to drain a pond dry simply that its inhabitants might gasp away their lives for man's edification, and afterwards lie there to rot. But it is not evil to try and catch them with a hook or (otherwise than in a sporting sense) with a net. Our interest lies not in the killing, but in the contest of wits and skill, in the eating, or perhaps in profit to be made. We are developing natural and healthy faculties, not pandering to a morbid lust of cruelty. It is possible, I maintain, for a sportsman to feel for his quarry both respect and affection, and yet to pursue it none the less. Does this seem a hard saying? Yet you may prove it by the fatherly eye which a fishery owner casts on his fish, and the arrangements he makes for their health and comfort. Nothing is more saddening to an honest angler than the sight of fish dying in polluted water, and that is chiefly because he looks on fish as his familiar friends, and grieves that they should be so sadly used.

You begin to find your friendly feelings wearing thin? Well, let us try and catch something more. This barbel hole is unremunerative, but I see signs of activity by the camp-sheathing there. Look at that little wave rippling along the beam. That's a perch for certain, hard at work getting his supper. There's another. At this time of the evening you may often see perch close in to the sides of locks and weirs and walls. We'll move the punt round to the other side

of the point, and try to catch one or two of those fellows from the shore. Put on my float tackle while I paddle round; yours has only got the tiny hook on it.

Let's have the smallest of those gudgeon you caught out of the well. Here's the little hand-net. Now put him on your hook by the corner of the lip. Get out of the punt and drop the bait in close to the camp-sheathing, just where we saw the perch feed. Let it sink slowly, and then keep the float in the same place. There, it's off! Let him have it a bit. Now tighten. Not got him? The gudgeon's all right, so the perch can't have meant business. Try again. The same result? Evidently the gudgeon's not what they want.

We'll try a small worm on that gudgeon hook. When perch are not very keen sometimes that will tempt them. Now then, sink and draw it quite close to the piles, just as you did when you got that fish before lunch. Not too deep; the fish are evidently not far from the top. There you are—got him at once. Easy with him; that roach hook is on very fine gut. I'll get the landing-net. Here he is; not far off ¾ pound. Go and catch another.

When you find perch on the feed it's as well to waste no time, especially when there isn't much daylight left. I don't think they are so prone to bite in the evening as some other fish, and you never know how long they'll go on. Hullo! that's not a perch this time, unless it's a monster. That steady run might almost be a trout.

Yes, let him have line if he wants it. He's a biggish fish. Handle him lightly, or you'll never see him at all with that gut. Now you've turned him. Get your line back steadily and keep your rod-point up. No, I haven't seen a sign of him yet; he's playing deep. I think I saw a gleam then. Yes, it's a big chub. Now you can see him yourself. He's nearly ready for the net. Let the stream carry him down into it. There you are; and a very nice fish, $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds if he's an ounce. It does you credit to have landed him on a fine roach-hook.

Yes, it's time we were off, if we are to have any supper. You don't want to keep the barbel, do you? Here he goes back into the river, then. We'll give the chub to one of the villagers, and have the perch for breakfast. The gudgeon will be all right in the well. Now for home.

You feel as if you'd like to sing? Yes, I understand. If you were a quartette, I would beg you to do so. A quartette on the water at dusk is a delicious thing. You want soft harmonies to blend with the slumber-song of the river. A duet? I think, perhaps, it would be better if I resumed the topic which you cut short a while ago. The pale fires of night begin to inspire me with a hope that, after all, we can attain to some comprehension of what, under the sun, seemed incomprehensible. After all, the soul . . .

CHAPTER V

ROACH

A CERTAIN attitude in most Scottish writers on fishing, an attitude, not, perhaps, quite of superiority, but certainly of satisfaction with the world of waters as they find it, is probably due to the fact that they are fortunate enough to have trout everywhere. The hard-working Scot, when he takes his day of recreation, as a matter of course goes trout-fishing and is not even without his opportunities of salmon, though this last sport is rapidly becoming a corollary of wealth, and in course of time will be beyond the reach of the impecunious unless they act in combination. The people's fish in Scotland, however, is still the trout, and doubtless, if our waters were as well provided as theirs, the trout would be the people's fish in England too.

As things are, it is the roach, and, estimating importance by popularity, we may say that this red-finned, silver-scaled fish is the most important we have in fresh water. To get some idea of its influence, go to one of our big London railway-stations, such as Paddington

or Liverpool Street or Waterloo, on a Saturday or Sunday morning, and look at the crowd of anglers which is setting out for the Thames or Lea. Nine out of ten of them are equipped for roach-fishing, and nine out of ten of them set little store on any other kind of fish, though, of course, a big bream or tench, or a happening chub or barbel, will not come amiss to them as a by-product of the day.

One reason for the popularity of the roach is that it is found practically everywhere, except in swift, cold mountain streams, and, moreover, where it is found it is usually abundant; though over-fishing may reduce the size of the fish caught, it seems practically impossible to exterminate them altogether. Roach will maintain the struggle for existence against overwhelming odds, and if they are given half a chance, they will multiply enormously. You sometimes find a small pond which is literally alive with roach, because there has been nothing to keep down their numbers, and therefore they have increased by thousands. In such a place they do not grow, of course, because there is not enough food for them, and they are perpetually hungry. With a worm or paste you can catch them as fast as your hook can be baited, but probably you will not get one in a hundred which is worth keeping. Such roach are good for nothing except for restocking other waters. Placed in rich feeding-grounds, doubtless they would grow apace and serve a useful purpose.

And thus transplanted they would in time come to acquire the subtlety which is the other chief reason for the roach's popularity. Pond roach of the kind described are much like sheep, as Walton said, and whither one goes the rest will follow, even though it be to the painful upper air. But place those foolish ones in the hard-fished Lea, and try to catch them two years later. I will make bold to say that unless you have studied the art of roach-fishing to some purpose, you will have but small reward for your trouble.

Yet are roach, even in a river like the Lea, not *too* difficult. They are not like some generations of carp, absolutely proof against temptation, and the man who can fish can catch them sooner or later. They have the merit of being difficult, but not hopeless, and so of encouraging perseverance. Moreover, they are not so capricious as some fish, and if circumstances are not hopelessly unfavourable, you can depend on their feeding at some time during nearly every day of the season. The skilled roach-fisher very seldom has a blank day.

As much ingenuity has been expended on roach-fishing as on any branch of the sport, though in essentials it is somewhat simpler than some other branches—such as trout-fishing—owing to the fact that the roach is not a cannibal, nor very greatly addicted to taking flies on the surface. Being largely a bottom and vegetable feeder, it invites certain simple methods of attack, and these are the methods usually employed.

Where ingenuity has been displayed chiefly is in the evolution of tackle and preparation of baits. The roach-rod which is mostly used by London anglers is a remarkable thing, to whose evolution much thought and experiment have gone. Known as a "pole," it is a weapon of from 17 to 20 feet in length, made of light hollow cane, and as stiff as a poker, except for a few inches at the extreme tip. The butt is nearly as thick as a man's wrist, and the whole thing in a length of 20 feet must weigh well over 2 pounds. To me the use of this engine is an impossibility; it seems so cumbrous and heavy that I feel as if I were taking a sledge-hammer to collect a butterfly. But a convinced pole-fisher makes nothing of its weight, and, supporting the butt along his forearm or resting it on his knee, he follows the passage of the float down its swim, and is able to strike with accuracy and speed the moment he detects a bite. It is a wondrous art.

The pole-fisher uses no reel as a rule, fishing with what is called a "tight line," and if he hooks a big fish he has to play it with the rod, keeping the point immediately over it so far as he can. To lessen the risk both in the strike and in battle, some men have the tip of the rod made of a few inches of whalebone, which gives readily to the pull of a fish; others have an inch or two of elastic between the line and the top ring, a device which is of similar effect. Whether with whalebone or elastic, I think that to fish without a reel

is to tempt Providence, and the man who does so deserves to be "pointed," which, as I have before explained, is to find fish, line, rod, and arm, all in one straight line. When that has happened there is nothing more to be done except to repair damages; if you cannot stop a fish, and also can give it no more line, the result is obvious.

Moreover, without a reel a man has to practise a kind of jugglery in landing his fish. The line is usually a good deal shorter than the rod, so when it is time to use the net the butt has to be removed so that the fish may be reached. A simple application of Euclid his lore will show why this is. Sometimes the second joint must be removed too. Lea anglers are extraordinarily adroit in doing all this, but to me it seems a plaguy business.

The supporters of the roach-pole and tight line object to the reel because, they say, it interferes with the immediateness of the strike. A light undressed silk line is usually used in roach-fishing, and this, blown about by the wind, is slack between the rings of the rod, and has to be drawn taut before the strike can take effect. There is, perhaps, something in this, but the trouble can be lessened by using a fine *dressed* silk line, which does not catch the wind so much. Anyhow, whatever may be its drawbacks, I regard a reel as a necessity.

The perfect roach-rod does not exist. This is not

surprising, inasmuch as the perfect roach-rod is of precisely the same action as the roach-pole, but only weighs a quarter of the pole's weight, or less. Unhappily, in hollow cane you can only get uniform stiffness by increasing the bulk of the rod at each joint, with, of course, a considerable increase of weight. Up to about 14 feet you can get a delightful roach-rod which is stiff and yet light; I have one of just under that length which weighs 15 ounces, and which is light in the hand and true in the strike. Over that length, if the weight is to be kept down, you have to sacrifice stiffness—at any rate, my experiments so far have shown that.

In the search for the ideal, I have tried a good many rods, and for a time was well pleased with Japanese canes. These rods can be got in considerable lengths, up to 18 or 19 feet, and they are much lighter than roach-poles of the same length. But they are not at all strong, and they have to be ringed, whipped, and served with winch fittings before they will answer one's purpose. Nor do they ever have the stiffness and action that are desirable. After some years I abandoned Japanese rods.

My latest experiment has been much more successful, and I think it indicates the way in which the ideal roach-rod may be evolved. I found one day some lengths of material in the shop of Messrs. F. T. Williams and Company, 22, Wellington Street, Strand,

which, I was informed, was called Spanish reed. It was extraordinarily light, and seemed stiff enough to do what was wanted. The result was a queer rod of 18 feet 6 inches, which weighs just under 17 ounces—a record in the way of lightness, I should say. It has its drawbacks, however, since the butt and second joints are each 7 feet long, the top being 4 feet 6 inches. To a humble-minded man, progress through crowded streets with 7 feet of rod-case is a trying thing, and I must confess that I have not used the rod so often as I ought.

When I have used it I have found it a pleasant possession, though it is somewhat more limber than could be wished. If it were made in three 5-feet joints and one of 3 feet 6 inches, with the butt a bit thicker, I believe it would be of better action. But that would, of course, increase its weight by a few ounces. Anyhow, it has convinced me that roach-rods *can* be made very much lighter than they usually are, and that Spanish reed is the material by which that may be achieved. I have handled French reed rods which were very light, but have never yet seen a good one. I believe, however, that first-rate roach-rods are made in France which are much less ponderous than our roach-poles. Possibly they are on somewhat similar lines to my experimental rod. For a man who lived near his fishing, 7-foot joints need have no terrors, so perhaps the idea will commend itself to somebody.

Floats, casts, and hooks have also been deeply studied by roach-fishers, and many men have their own pet fancies in these things. Personally, I am no bigot in the matter of floats, but I like a roach-float to be of slender build, whether it be made of cork, quill, or reed. Also, I like to have the tip of it arranged aptly for the notification of bites. At the top is a little blob of sealing-wax, red or black, then comes a white space, and then, just showing above water, the red or black india-rubber float-cap. When a roach bites and pulls the float so far down that the india-rubber is no longer visible, I take no notice. (I merely record my own practice; the Lea expert would doubtless strike and catch his pounder. I am not a Lea expert.) When the float goes so far down that only the sealing-wax is visible, I strike if I can sufficiently collect my wits. If that has been impossible, I register a vow to strike next time. When the float has sunk so deep that the sealing-wax is also under water, then I return thanks for a bite that *is* a bite, and am sometimes enabled to catch a fish. Your really good roach-fisher probably needs none of these aids to striking, but for the ordinary duffer the marking of the float-tip is, I can guarantee, a useful thing. And the blob of sealing-wax is more visible on the whole than a white tip. A black blob

FIG. 18.—TIP OF A ROACH-FLOAT.

is, I think, more visible than a red one, especially in the evening.

For casts, the choice is between drawn gut and horsehair. I use either, with no very clear idea which is the better. Sometimes horsehair seems to catch more fish, sometimes it does not. It is ticklish stuff to use, and you must strike with a gentle hand, but it has the advantage that it does not fray like gut. It will land quite big fish if you play them cannily, and its elasticity makes the fight very exciting and pleasurable. I prefer white or cream horsehair to any other colour, but have done well with chestnut. See that every link in the cast is quite round and clear, or you will surely be broken at an inconvenient moment. The biggest fish I have landed on horsehair myself have been a bream of $4\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a chub rather over $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, but I have seen a man land a bream of well over 5 pounds on it, and have heard of still better captures. With plenty of time, a light hand, and clear water, there is no reason why one should be broken. But if there are weeds or other obstructions a new hook will be needed.

As to hooks, I know nothing better than those sold in the tackle trade as "Crystal." Roach sizes vary from about No. 9 to No. 13, the last and smallest being useful for such baits as stewed wheat, single gentles, and other trifles. For paste I like rather a larger hook. If you fish with hair-casts the hooks should also be tied on hair; hair and gut do not blend at all. If you use gut-

casts the hooks should be tied on fine drawn gut. For a water which is at all hard-fished, I do not consider the finest drawn gut, known as 5X, at all too fine, but it must be handled with discretion, and you must be ready to renew your hook, and perhaps your cast, now and then, since such gossamer stuff frays very easily, and when frayed is liable to break.

A light Nottingham reel, 3½ inches in diameter, and 50 yards of the finest dressed-silk line you can get are necessary. I used to be able to get a dressed-silk line about as thick as a cobweb. I think it was American in origin, and I know that it was not much stronger than a cobweb. It was probably this last quality which removed it from the sphere of possibilities; at any rate, I have seen no such lines for a good many years. Though it was so feeble, it was a delightful roach-line, and I fished with it more comfortably than with anything else I have ever discovered. With it it was possible to throw a light float and its accompanying shot for a distance of 20 yards or more. This feat is not often needed, but it is sometimes very useful, and with thicker lines you want a heavier float and more shot. Still, perhaps the cobweb line is not to be regretted. It was not really strong enough for general purposes, and it needed great care on the part of the angler. Very fine lines can still be obtained which are more practical and quite pleasant to use.

In considering baits for roach it is well to start with

the first essential—ground-bait. Ground-bait is a free-will offering made by the angler, not wholly, I am afraid, in a disinterested spirit, but rather with an eye to favours to come. Its object is to induce the fish to feed at certain times, in certain places, and on a certain type of food. Ground-baiting is necessary for most of the carp tribe, and the method that will do for one will, with slight variations, do for the others.

The simplest and easiest form of ground-bait is a mixture of bread and bran, and it is made as follows: Place as much stale bread as household economics will permit you to lay hands on in a basin or pail, and then pour water in till it is all adrift. Leave it there till it is thoroughly soaked (old crusts take a long time to soak, but the process can be hastened by using hot water), and then pour away the water and squeeze as much more out of the bread as you can with your hands. When you have got it as free from water as you can, pour in bran and knead. Knead with diligence and muscle until the bread and bran have thoroughly coalesced and until you have a sort of firm pudding, which is of solid texture without being moist and sticky. Then you have admirable ground-bait.

If you are fishing in still water you need not make the ground-bait nearly so stiff; indeed, so long as the bread is well soaked and broken up with the bran, it is an advantage that the mixture should be rather sloppy.

Thrown into the water, it will scatter better and give the fish an opportunity of whetting rather than of appeasing their appetites. But for a river where there is a stream to be reckoned with, and where you want your ground-bait to sink at a particular spot without disintegrating too soon, the stiffer the bait the better it will be. Some men mix clay or sand with it to make it sink properly, casting in balls about the size of an

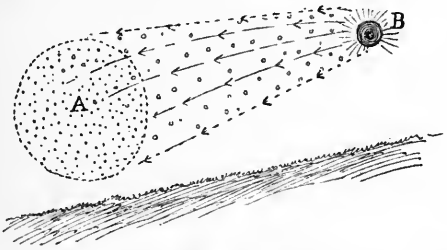

FIG. 19.

A, the spot to be baited, may be 5 yards or more from *B*, the point where the bait reaches the water. The diagram shows roughly how the bait will scatter before it reaches the bottom.

orange. A pebble in the middle of each ball will have the same effect. In baiting a river-swim, bear in mind the depth and strength of the current, and cast in the balls of ground-bait so that they will reach the bottom at the point required, and not below it, or you will defeat your own object.

To my mind the bread and bran make adequate ground-bait for any kind of roach-fishing, but you can

add to the mixture a few grains of stewed wheat or boiled rice or pearl barley, and if there are bream and carp in the water as well, fragments of boiled potato are useful. In some places men use brewer's grains as ground-bait, and fish with stewed wheat as hook-bait. Some very clear rivers give better results if you bait simply with gentles thrown in loose, using gentles on the hook as well. But this scarcely amounts to formal ground-baiting, and it is a part of a rather special kind of roach-fishing, which I shall describe presently.

For hook-baits you have a wide range of choice. The best are as follows: Bread-paste, made by squeezing soaked stale bread in a cloth until all the water is wrung out of it, and then kneading it in the hand; wheat stewed slowly over the fire until it swells and just begins to crack at one side; maggots or gentles, kept in sand until they are of a pleasing creamy colour; worms of various kinds; bread-crust, with the harder black portion scraped or pared off, cut into little cubes; biscuit paste, made of sweet biscuits (Maries or some such brand), soaked and squeezed like the bread; caddis grubs; macaroni; and other things.

Of these, worms are most useful in winter, and gentles too, except in special circumstances. Caddis grubs are not always easy to get. Of the rest, paste and bread-crust are the simplest, and perhaps the best, though stewed wheat is very killing in some places. Occasionally paste flavoured with cheese is useful for

roach, but this is more properly a chub bait. Coloured pastes also have their advocates, as does paste flavoured with a tiny drop of aniseed oil. I am not sure how attractive this last preparation may be to fish, but it has to be remembered that a very small bottle of aniseed oil is capable of flavouring not only paste, but also a river valley—indeed, an angler's whole life. Even where it is corked it will do so, and unless you are unusually fond of the odour, you will do well to handle the stuff gingerly.

The orthodox advice with regard to ground-bait and hook-bait is: feed the fish first to put them into a proper humour, and then offer them on your hook something of like nature to the free food, but of superior excellence. Theoretically, this advice is perfectly sound, but in practice I have found that the best roach-bait of all is the identical bread-and-bran ground-bait with which you have been giving them free meals. The attractiveness of this bait lies, I think, more in its consistency than in its actual flavour or nature. Placed on a hook and committed to the stream, it gradually melts as it swims, and the fragments that come away from the main piece attract the fish's notice and invite it to the process of tasting, which naturally developes into a real bite. When using bread and bran on the hook you are, in fact, ground-baiting the whole time on a small scale.

But do not be surprised if you find the bait a little

trying to your patience. You have to renew it after every swim probably, so it will keep you busy. In a strong current which is also deep ground-bait is rather too much for the temper. But in shallow swims (from 3 to 4 feet in depth) or in deep ones which run very slow ground-bait is profitable enough to make its inconveniences worth enduring. You can, of course make the mixture as solid as paste almost by increasing the proportion of bread in it, but by so doing you lessen its chief merit, which is its solubility. If you cannot use ground-bait in its normal proportions, you may just as well use paste. And, of course, those lazy anglers who have to make even paste more clinging by adding cotton-wool to it will not dream of trying ground-bait at all. There are such anglers, but I think they have probably fallen into their error by starting life with a belief that fishing-paste must be made by the cook with flour and water. Bread-paste made after the fashion earlier prescribed can be an extremely solid thing, which will sit on a hook unmoved for half an hour or more. It can, in fact, be *too* solid.

Let me now, having spent an unconscionable time over preliminaries, endeavour to depict one or two roach swims which I know and love, and which may be taken as typical of roach swims in general.

First there is the thorn-bush swim, a place famous in the annals of one of the oldest fishing clubs in London. It is something between 3 and 4 feet in

depth, and it represents about the shallowest swim that can be fished in the orthodox manner, with the float under, or not far away from, the point of the rod. Only because the river is seldom very clear can you fish here in this way. Were the water like crystal, as in some streams, you would have to find a much deeper swim, or else approach this one in a different way.

Luckily, the river is almost always somewhat discoloured, so neither the angler seated on his camp-stool close to the water's edge, nor the rod extended over their heads, alarms the fish; presumably they cannot see them.

The stream is rather swift and the swim rather short, because the thorn-bush on the angler's left hand prevents him from casting his float far upstream. Where there is no impediment on either hand, a swim commanded by an 18-foot rod can be as much as 24 feet long, but here not more than 14 or 15 feet can be managed comfortably. It is important, therefore, that the bait should be brought down to the fish as soon, and kept near them as long, as possible. For this purpose I like rather a heavy float—a biggish goose-quill, for instance—which carries six good big split-shot, the lowest of them about 10 inches from the bait, which itself is 1 inch or less from the bottom. If you use bread-crust you can arrange your cast so that the distance between the hook and the water-line of the float is actually a little greater than the depth of the water, because

bread-crust has a tendency to rise in the water and float.

A rather heavy float has a further advantage in this swim in that it resists the assaults of wind better than a light one, both when you are swinging it through the air and also when it is in the water. Wind is almost inevitable at this swim in the daytime, and it blows a light float in every direction but the right one when it is in the air, and discomposes it in the water by bellying the line. A roach-bite is often indicated but slightly, and if the float is performing antics at the time the bite comes, you may never mark its coming at all. Also, I think, the fish may be actually prevented from biting by a float that drags or delays owing to wind; its behaviour obviously must make the bait do unexpected and suspicious things.

Fishing a roach swim is practically a repetition of a series of manual exercises. Swing bait and float out upstream, let them float downstream as far as rod and line will allow, lift them out, look at the hook as it hangs in the air to see if the bait wants renewing (and if it does, renew it), and then swing out again. The process goes on all day, with such variations as striking when the float dips and hooking and playing a fish. In the strike is displayed the roach-master's finest skill. He will detect a bite where many anglers would see nothing, and with a sharp but gentle upward movement of the rod-top will hook a fish that only intended to

have the bait in its mouth for a second. An unerring eye and an unfailing hand are necessary to this fishing.

Striking with precision is made much easier if you have only a little line between the rod-top and the float, a thing which is feasible in deep water and a slow current, where the length of a swim is not of the first importance, since the bait takes some time to travel even a short distance. But in shallow, rather quick water a short swim is over much too soon, and one has

FIG. 20.—FISHING A ROACH-SWIM.

to make it longer by having more line out between rod-top and float. At the thorn-bush one can quite well have 4 or 5 yards instead of 4 or 5 feet, and this makes it possible to fish well out in the stream. But it is necessary to handle the rod with regard to this length of line, so that the strike may not be delayed more than is essential. The ideal thing, of course, would be to have no line in the water above the float at all, but since this is usually impossible for several reasons, it is advisable to get as near the ideal as possible, and have

only a few inches on the water during the greater part of the swim.

This can only be achieved by the rod-point's being raised as the float comes down, until it is at its highest when the float is just opposite the angler, and then lowered on the second half of the journey. It travels, of course, with the float, though somewhat more slowly. Thus the longest possible swim is combined with the greatest attainable efficiency in striking. Bites are perhaps most frequent in the second half of the swim, so it is more important to guard against sagging line then. It is also more difficult. It will be found a help to quick striking if the reel-line is greased so that it floats.

The most profitable way of fishing this thorn-bush swim in my experience is also the most laborious. Before *every other* cast you must throw in two or three little lumps of ground-bait—no bigger than walnuts—and you must manage that your hook, baited with a piece as big as a thimble, follows immediately in their wake. Then, unless the fish are hopelessly out of humour, you will get a bite at almost every swim. And they will be good bites, which make the float go nearly or quite under—much better bites than you would get with paste, except in rare cases. Ground-bait has this merit, which is certainly a compensation for its otherwise troublesome nature.

Change from ground-bait to paste, and you will see

the difference at once. The fish still bite, it is true, but much more shyly. It is nibble, nibble, nibble, all along the swim; not till the very end of it, perhaps, does the float dip with any decision, and then probably the strike has no effect, because its angle is wrong and the hook is pulled out of the fish's mouth. A roach-master, mayhap, would call those nibbles splendid bites, and act accordingly; but for my part I need something more definite, and that is why I am so fond of ground-bait. In a hard-fished water it produces bolder bites than anything else I know.

A roach-bite is not always productive of a definite dip of the float. Sometimes it is shown by a stoppage very like that which occurs when the hook or shot gets caught in a piece of weed or some obstruction on the bottom. There *is* a difference, as a rule, between the stoppage caused by a fish and that caused by a weed, but I do not know how, or if, it can be explained in words. The angler who has done a lot of roach-fishing can usually detect it, but I think he does so by instinct rather than by definite signs which can be classified or described. The only difference between the two manifestations I seem to recognize myself is that a stoppage caused by a fish is somewhat more leisurely than the other. When your hook catches in a weed the effect is that the float stops, slants more and more as it strains on the line, and finally goes under. When it is a fish imitating a weed I think the float does not slant quite so much, and

delays doing so rather more. Sometimes, of course, it moves a little upstream, and then the bite is fairly obvious.

Another curious kind of bite is one which causes the float to slant a trifle downstream, and to travel just a thought quicker than the current. When this happens I take it that a fish has the bait in its mouth and is swimming off with it, probably pursued by others which have designs of taking it away. But I have not found that this sort of bite comes from big roach as a rule. If a big fish carries the float off at all, it generally does so against the stream.

A shallow swim like this has an advantage in the liveliness of the fight that its fish show. When hooked, their impulse is to run far and fast—that, indeed, is the impulse of all fish hooked in shallow water. A pound roach in 3 feet of water will often make the reel scream, and if you are using single hair or 5X gut it will want very careful playing.

The chief disadvantages about so shallow a swim are that it gives you a good deal of trouble in the fishing, aggravates the nuisance of wind, and makes returning under-sized roach a toilsome process if you are conscientious about it. Men say that fish "tell each other" about hooks which have pricked them, and whether this be literally so or not, I think they have ways of communicating alarms. The wise angler, therefore, does not return a fish so that it can imme-

diately go and tell its tale of wonder and dismay to its fellows. He takes it 20 yards downstream and slides it in gently there, in the hope that it will not for some time find its way back to its own place. When the little roach are numerous and active, this continual 20-yard excursion is tedious.

The essence of ideal roach-fishing is immobility. To get the full flavour of it you ought to be able to hook, play, land, and return your roach without moving from your seat. This is only possible in such a swim as that which I call the sedge swim. Here are from 8 to 9 feet of water within 6 feet of the sedges which line the bank. The stream is quite slow, and the float takes twice as long to cover 20 feet as it would in the shallower, swifter water. The fishing, to my mind, is far more enjoyable, since it is in every way more leisurely. Bites are slower, and yet bolder—often in this swim the float will go right under with firm decision; a hooked fish plays deep, and does not do sudden and alarming things which necessitate your jumping up and dancing on the bank; when it is beaten, you only have to slip the net in gently over the sedges and lift it out; and if it is a small one you can return it without moving. Perhaps you *ought* not to do this; even in deep water it may tell tales. But I, personally, do not trouble to make excursions when I am at the sedge swim, and I find that deep water condones a deal of laziness. The deeper the river, the less its fish are inclined to alarm.

For true enjoyment of roach-fishing give me a deep, slow swim, with shady trees at my back, sedges on which to rest the rod when rebaiting or unhooking a fish, and for the soul's peace green meadows furnished with restful kine beyond the river, and beyond them a line of low downs, with the evening sun on them and on the cluster of red roofs nestling at their foot. And on the quiet air should be bells summoning the faithful to evensong. Roach-fishing should be instinct with the peaceful charm of rural England when the work of the summer day is done.

There is apt to come a time during your roach-fishing when you are bored. Possibly the fish have ceased to feed, or possibly swim after swim produces no more than unsatisfactory nibbles which lead to no result. Your arm, too, is tired of the constant work with the long rod, and you desire a change of method which will enable you to go on fishing and yet to relax some of the strain. Now is the time to try what is inelegantly known as "tight-corking." This simply consists in keeping your bait on the bottom in one place and waiting for a roach to take it. Were you not using a float, the name of this fishing would be "legering," but with a float the name is what it is.

All you have to do is to put the float up the line, so that when the float is kept still the bait will lie on the bottom. Allowing for the stream, this means that the length of line between hook and water-line of the float

must exceed the depth of the water by from 6 to 12 inches. The current, of course, makes the line slant downstream, and the stronger it is, the greater the slant will be. When there is a handy clump of sedges in front of you the rod can rest thereon. But if you want to fish as far out as your rod will reach, you must have rod-rests, which consist of two forks disposed thus One supports the rod, the other prevents it from overbalancing, and both are cut from the nearest hedge and stuck into the ground.

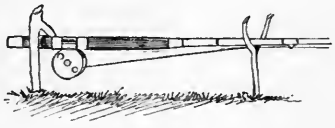

Fig. 21.

Generally a bite is fairly bold when you are fishing in this way, and a roach will sometimes tug at the line till the rod-top twitches. But it may leave the bait if it feels resistance, so it is wise to be ready to grasp the rod the moment you detect the beginning of a bite, and to ease to the fish a fraction. When the float seems to be going under, or gives a decided dip, strike at once. In "tight-corking" you can use a rather larger bait than in swimming, and by so doing you will, I think, get bigger fish.

Legering for roach may be pretty sport, and it sometimes pays very well in waters which are hard fished with float-tackle. You do not want such a long rod for this game, and, to be comfortable, you must have a light one. Generally you can make a very good legering

rod for roach by using, say, the three upper joints of your long rod. A couple of india-rubber rings slipped on to the end of the third joint make excellent winch-fittings. A small pierced bullet is usually a heavy enough lead, and its hole should be enlarged with a stiletto, so that the line may run freely through it. Have the bullet about 18 inches or 2 feet from the hook.

Having cast bullet and bait out into the swim somewhat downstream, keep the line taut and hold the rod so that you can just feel the bullet. A bite may take the form of a tug or tugs at the rod-point, or of a slow dragging pull which perhaps moves the line upstream. In either case strike without delay, and you ought to hook the fish. Delicacy of touch counts for a lot in legering for roach. Sometimes the pull may do little more than send a thrill along the line, and with too heavy a rod this might never reach the hand. The lighter the rod, the better one can feel the presence of a fish.

Now and then you will come upon a river which holds fine roach, but which is too weedy for float-fishing, and has too much current for ordinary legering. Chalk streams like the lower Test and the Kennet in some places present this problem. Here, I think, the tackle known as "the paternoster" is of value. In this tackle the lead (shaped like a pear) is at the end of the cast, and the hook is some 6 inches above it, fastened so that it hangs at right angles to the cast. You fish the pater-

noster by feeling, as the leger, and strike immediately you are conscious of a touch. This tackle is very useful for fishing runs between the weeds, which you could not get at in any other way. In chalk streams, when roach bite at all, they usually bite boldly, so there need be no anxiety as to detecting a bite.

I have said that of all roach-fishing I most prefer using a float in a deep, slow swim. Yet some of my happiest memories are of roach-fishing without any proper equipment at all, but with an improvisation made up hurriedly when I have been supposed to be fly-fishing. Sometimes on a hot day I have come upon some deep, clear, still pool on a trout stream in which shadowy forms could be seen moving far down, with an occasional gleam of silver, as some array of scales caught and returned the light. And now and again, with the aid of a slice of bread, I have had unexpected sport. Let me relate a recent instance of this, experienced during the memorable summer of 1911.

Fig. 22.

My esteemed friend William had asked me to fish with him on the Avon some distance above Salisbury, and I had sent off immediate and voluble acceptance of the kind invitation. I enumerated the things that I

would bring with me, laying stress on the roach-rod. Whereupon he wrote straightway, intimating that, for his part, he had no belief in roach-rods, and that on my own head anything of that sort must be. Fine fat trout and monstrous grayling were what he meant me to catch. Roach! The mere suggestion (so I read him) cast a slur on a highly-favoured water, even though the Avon lower down is the finest roach river in the south. It was partly owing to his vehemence and partly to the discouraging effect of drought that in the end I started with only a fly-rod and my box of dry flies. Though I knew of old that the water held roach in places, fishing for them did not seem a profitable venture, and I gave up the idea of it.

Oddly enough, it was William's own doing that brought the thing about after all. Of his fat trout and monstrous grayling we had seen little but the vanishing tails. There was no fly of any kind, and even the cool hour after the sun's down-going seemed to make no difference in the proceedings, for not a fish above the status of a minnow could be seen to rise. I was not surprised ; the low, stale water and grilling heat were enough to account for anything. I was resigned and fairly philosophical when William came in babbling of wonders to be seen in the big hatch-hole—a great draught of fishes, which he thought must be "chubs" (he always refers to them like that, when he does not call them "chevens"; his attitude towards all except

trout is what I should describe as aloof). My curiosity and greed aroused, I went off to explore, and found the fish, as he had described, cruising about the big, still pool. They were some distance off, and at first I thought they *were* chub, but presently discovered that they were roach. There was a shoal of about fifty, running from about ½ pound up to 1½ pounds, with three or four patriarchs among them that looked more. They took no notice of flies, which I tried both dry and wet, and at last, having failed to catch a trout which was rising in a corner of the pool, I went back to luncheon pondering.

With a little tact at that meal I managed to introduce the question of bread, and eventually won William to an admission that he would not be seriously aggrieved if I took a piece with me in the afternoon, and sought to catch some of those "roaches." So forth I fared, armed with a sufficient supply, and presently stood on the edge of the pool throwing in a few pellets to see what would happen. Very little water was coming through the hatches, and, partly screened by tall vegetation, I could see to the bottom of 6 or 7 feet of water, and very interesting it was. Right on the bottom close under me were some dim, grey shapes moving slowly about, evidently big grayling, and one darker shape, which looked like a trout. About mid-water were some roach, and near the surface a few dace. Farther out in the pool, where it began to shallow some 15 yards away,

lay a couple of pike of no great size, and in their vicinity a large, black-looking trout cruised round restlessly. Standing as quietly as wasps would allow behind the natural screen, I had a view of fish life almost as complete as could be got in an aquarium. But it did not look promising for sport.

In a place like that, where roach are never fished for and natural food is abundant, bread-paste is often quite useless without previous ground-baiting, as the taste for it must be acquired by the fish. In this instance, however, they took to it after a kindly fashion, and the preliminary pellets were all seized and swallowed before they had touched the bottom. Then I stripped a No. 1 fly of its dressing, and attached the bare hook to the fly-cast, which tapered to 3X. A small pellet of paste soon concealed the hook, and sank slowly among the roach. Then I had a rude shock. Those roach, absolutely uneducated and unfished as they must be, yet discriminated between the true and the false. They came and inspected my bait, but absolutely refused to touch it. Even worse, they began to get alarmed or excited, and instead of remaining in the deep water, all cruised off to the other side of the pool, out of reach. But, as is their way, they presently returned and took a few more free pellets of paste, and then one of them swam up to the hook-bait, opened his mouth, took it in, and was on. After quite a long fight I felt for my net. I failed to find it, for the sufficient reason that I

had left it in William's garden—a piece of carelessness that deserved punishment. However, it did not greatly matter, as it was possible to lead the fish to the shingle at the tail of the pool, there beach it, and then lift it out. This manœuvre accomplished, I found myself the proud possessor of a beautiful roach of 1½ pounds.

After it had been killed and placed in the creel, I returned to my fishing. Then followed a very tantalizing half-hour. The fish would have none of the bait, though now and then a free pellet would be accepted, and at last I got desperate. A veteran was swimming past, and I agitated the bait in front of his nose, a very improper proceeding, as any roach expert could have told me. But the fish took the paste as if its antics were all that had been needed to convince him of its good faith. Some minutes later I was anxiously watching the needle of my spring-balance to see if, at last, after many years of endeavour, I had caught a 2-pounder. And I had—2 pounds 1 ounce! Murmuring gratefully about glass cases, I placed him reverently in the creel, and prepared to catch his fellow. I had a bite and missed it, and then nothing more happened for a long time. The paste seemed equally ineffectual whatever it did, whether rising or sinking, on the bottom or at mid-water, stationary or in agitation. Occasionally one of the grayling would come and look at it when it moved, but the roach fled before it, or seemed to do so. It was when I had given up

hope that the fourth bite came. I felt the line twitch, struck, and saw the gleam of a broad side far down in the water. This proved to be a roach of exactly the same weight as the second—2 pounds, 1 ounce—and a very handsome pair they made.

It was a queer stroke of luck which ordained that four bites (I could get no more) should produce three fish of such size, while all the smaller roach would have nothing to do with me. Usual experience would suggest something very different. But it is not for me to complain. Even William was somewhat impressed by the trophies, and talked vaguely of having a shot at roach-fishing himself some day.

Four bites in a day's fishing are not much to boast about, but I think it might have been possible to get more had I been better equipped. On an earlier page I have said that bread-paste and similar foodstuffs do not come naturally to roach everywhere, and probably that pool of the Avon was a place where gentles or caddis-grubs would have been much more effective. Gentles are the larvæ of land-flies, bluebottles, but they bear a family likeness to the larvæ of some water-flies, and are almost certain to be to the taste of fish which live in a chalk stream where fly larvæ are plentiful. Had I had a store of gentles, thrown a few dozen in from time to time as ground-bait, and used one, or perhaps two, on a small, sharp hook, I believe bites would not have been lacking.

As a matter of fact, the pool was just the place for this kind of fishing, since there was little or no stream, and the gentles would have sunk naturally and easily towards the bottom. Where there is an appreciable stream it is useless throwing in gentles loose, since they simply get swept down the river. If you want to ground-bait with gentles in a river, you must enclose them in something which will sink to the bottom. That something may be ordinary ground-bait, or clay, or even earth. But, on the whole, I do not recommend ground-baiting with gentles in a stream; the fate of the gentles is too uncertain. In a still pool, on the other hand, their gradual sinking and wriggling are almost irresistible to the fish.

The efficacy of a slowly-sinking bait is a thing to be remembered when you are fishing such a pool, and can get no sport with ordinary tackle and methods. If you have no gentles, try a ragged piece of the crumb of a loaf, using just enough shot to overcome its buoyancy and carry it slowly down. For all the smallness of its mouth, a roach will absorb quite a large piece of bread-crumb, and will not readily let it go again. If the water is deep and you are using a float, probably the first sign of a bite will be that the float does not cock, and the next that it begins to sail off aslant. The reason for this is that the roach has swum up to meet the bait, and has taken it somewhere near mid-water.

One other unusual mode of float-fishing must be

mentioned, and that is fishing with silkweed. This is most useful in weir-pools rather early in the season, when the roach are feeding greedily on fragments of weed broken off the stones and supports of the weir. You simply wrap a piece of silkweed round your hook, fish at a depth of about 2 feet, and let the float travel out with the stream. You will sometimes catch chub as well as roach in this way.

Lastly, there is fly-fishing for roach to be considered as a pleasant though not very frequent possibility. Hot weather in the early part of the season gives the best chance for the fly-rod. Late in June and early in July there are often plenty of roach still on the shallows, possibly busy recovering from spawning, possibly helping themselves to recovery by devouring the spawn of chub or even of their own kin. It is true that at that time most of them are not in good condition, and you will catch a number that are slimy, rough in the scales, and only fit to be returned. But you may get a few that are bright and plump, and worth keeping.

Later in the season, after a few hot days, you may find roach near the surface and even rising to natural flies, and if you do you should get excellent sport. By August the fish are in excellent condition, and fight well, especially on a light fly-rod.

The best method of fly-fishing for them is to draw a wet fly, or flies, slowly along under the surface. When the sun is shining you can often see two or three roach

following deliberately, and after what seems a long time you will see one of them open and shut its mouth, the line will tighten, and you can strike. You can scarcely draw the flies too slowly or wait too long before striking, because roach take an inordinate time to make up their minds, but usually take the fly in the end. I have sometimes caught a lot of roach with fly in lakes, where, especially if the water is shallow, they seem generally more disposed to fly-taking than in rivers.

The dry fly is not very successful with roach, though they will rise at it sometimes. It seems as if they do not know what to make of it, and could hardly master the trick of getting it into their mouths. The only time at which I have seen roach really rising with enthusiasm has been during the Mayfly fortnight, and then their enthusiasm is unwelcome, because they are not yet in season, and they only spoil expensive flies designed for trout.

Once or twice I have caught roach on great big chub flies, and on one solitary occasion I caught three on a salmon fly. What induced them to take such a thing is beyond me.

CHAPTER VI

A MORNING WITH THE DACE

It is now July, and uncommonly hot, so hot that even an ichthyomaniac (a new but, I submit, a useful word) does not feel able for great exertions. To watch a float in the shade would be the ideal form of fishing to-day, but places where that can be done with much hopes of profit are some way off and need a journey by foot or bicycle. Let us rather take the fly-rod and see if a dish of dace may not be cozened out of the small stream which flows almost at the door. We may not hope for great things, because the said small stream forms, as it were, a side-path leading to the highway of Thames, and is therefore much disturbed by boats at some times of day. Also it knows all the wiles of the local angler both in summer and winter, and therefore is not exactly rich in fish. The local angler does not look very destructive as he sits by the deep holes watching his float, but he knows his business, and does not leave many perch or jack to welcome the visitor, while his attentions have made the roach both shy and small.

The only fish which have to some extent evaded him are the dace, which live mostly on the shallows, and the chub, which are chiefly in one or two pools above the angler's favourite swims. Besides, the local angler hardly ever fishes with a fly here; you have to go to a trout district in the North or West to find village fishermen who as a class appreciate the uses of a fly-rod. The nearest approach that they make to fly-fishing in these parts is the ancient art of dibbling, an art which Izaak Walton has taught as well as any of our writers.

It is the fashion nowadays to say that Walton's instructions have little practical value, but we moderns would be hard put to it to better a good many of them. Listen to this:

"Go to the same hole in which I caught my chub, where in most hot days you will find a dozen or twenty chevens floating near the top of the water; get two or three grasshoppers as you go over the meadow, and get secretly behind the tree, and stand as free from motion as possible. Then put a grasshopper on your hook, and let your hook hang a quarter of a yard short of the water, to which end you must let rest your rod on some bough of the tree; but it is likely the chubs will sink down towards the bottom of the water at the first shadow of your rod, for a chub is the fearfullest of fishes, and will do so if but a bird flies over him and makes the least shadow on the water; but they will presently rise up to the top again, and there lie soaring

till some shadow affrights them again. I say, when they lie upon the top of the water, look out the best chub, which you, setting yourself in a fit place, may very easily see, and move your rod, as softly as a snail moves, to that chub you intend to catch; let your bait fall gently upon the water 3 or 4 inches before him, and he will infallibly take the bait, and you will be as sure to catch him."

There is the whole art of dibbling compressed into one short paragraph, and we have in no wise improved on it in the two hundred and sixty years that have elapsed since it was written. Indeed, it is a faithful description of the way in which the farm-labourers above the second mill catch their 3-pounders on likely summer mornings to this day. But I think they prefer cockchafers as a bait to anything else.

Walton's tactics of dibbling may be used as well for dace and roach as for chub, but at the moment we are more concerned with the artificial fly, which gives us less trouble and as much profit. We will cut across the field below the boathouse and make for the place where I saw that shoal of ½-pounders, a notable family in this district, where a ½-pounder is a rarity. They are worthy of, and probably need, the arts of the dry-fly man.

About these arts I had perhaps here better say something, as also about the wet-fly method, though no long story need be made of it. In general outline the way of catching all fly-taking coarse fish—chub, dace, roach,

and rudd—with artificial fly is the same, and it may be stated that, in general, the wet-fly method is better than the other. The distinction between them is simply that the wet-fly is fished under water and the dry-fly on the top. Wet-fly fishing is simple. You cast your fly, or flies, to the desired spot, let them sink a little, and then draw them towards you slowly. It is the custom of all the fish enumerated to follow a fly some little distance before they take it.

Dry-fly fishing is a little more complicated, but not much.

So far as coarse fish are concerned, the elaborate and formidable preparations that men make who fish for chalk-stream trout are quite unnecessary. For one thing, coarse-fish rivers seldom have a well-defined and definite hatch of fly, as do chalk streams, and for another, coarse fish are, as a rule, much less particular about the nature of the fly than trout. This is not quite invariable, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, so long as the artificial fly has a remote resemblance to a natural fly of any kind, it is good enough to catch fish.

The chief need for the dry-fly dace or chub fisher is to be able to use his weapons to advantage, and to make both line and fly float on the surface of the water. The line can be made to float by being rubbed with grease of some kind—either deer or mutton fat, vaseline, or gishurstine. Some of the tackle-makers sell tins of line ointment which are excellent, causing the line to

float without damaging it. It is doubtful whether vaseline is not bad for a silk line, making it rotten and untrustworthy. Gishurstine, which is rather like it in appearance, has not, in my experience, had deleterious effects. If you rub it lightly on to 20 yards of dressed silk line, and then make a cast on the water, you will see the line floating on the surface as if it were made of cork. That is what is required.

To make the fly buoyant, many anglers anoint it lightly with paraffin. For a winged fly this is an advantage, but it is hardly necessary for the small hackled patterns which are much used in dace-fishing. They are quite capable of floating well without any assistance. If you want paraffin, you can buy pleasant little oil-bottles designed for fishermen.

FIG. 23.—WINGED AND HACKLE FLIES FOR DRY-FLY WORK.

Hackle patterns have the advantage that they can be used either wet or dry; they last longer, and they are also cheaper to buy. Nor do you need many different kinds. Flies of the palmer type, which look like little hairy caterpillars, are the best, and half a dozen patterns are plenty. Red Palmer, Black Palmer, Soldier Palmer, Red Tag, Green Insect, and Brunton's Fancy—here is a list that should suffice. Let the sizes vary somewhat, the smallest being what is known as 00 size, and the biggest No. 3. Have them on eyed hooks, and

keep them in one of the little partition boxes that can be obtained at any tackle-shop.

A few winged dry-flies are useful, say another half a dozen patterns—Wickham's Fancy, Coachman, Black Gnat, Red Quill, Ginger Quill, and Medium Olive Quill. Both Wickham and Coachman may be dressed in sizes up to No. 3, but the others should not be larger than No. 1.

With this assortment of flies, and, if you like, a few winged flies tied for wet-fly work, an angler is sufficiently

Fig. 24.

equipped for most purposes of coarse fishing. Some special chub flies are wanted as well, but not to-day, and so I will not now speak of them. The accompanying figure (24) shows how small eyed flies are attached to gut. Large ones are put on in the same way as naked hooks (see Fig. 13). For purposes of storing, stick your flies into little rings of paper. Then, if the wind should blow them out of your box, as it loves to do, you may have a chance of recovering them. You can see a bit of white paper on the ground, whereas you have a very poor chance of seeing a single fly.

Enough of these wearisome details. Here we are at

the bend, where the shallow begins to tail off into deeper water. All the way from here down to the Thames, a mile or more, the stream is deep and rather sluggish. All the way up to the mill, another mile perhaps, it is shallow and with some swiftness of current, though there are a few deeper holes here and there in which the chub lie. The dace are scattered about all over the shallows, and it is by no means easy to catch them in any number. You see how bright the gravel bottom is, and how clear the water. Fish living in such a place are quick to mark the presence of an angler and the waving of a rod, so you have to go cautiously. Walton's advice about hiding behind a tree is not to be disdained even in this kind of fishing.

The shoal of big dace lives under those willows on the far bank, where the stream has worn itself a somewhat deeper channel. The fish move up and down over an area of some 20 yards, but I think their principal home is just behind that projecting root. Look carefully at the water at that point for a minute or two, and you will soon see if they are there. In likely summer weather and shallow water dace can hardly refrain from rising now and then, even though they be not really on the feed, and an occasional ring is sure to make its appearance on the surface, as some member of the shoal puts its nose up to intercept a floating trifle. The dace is an active and perhaps inquisitive fish, and a bluebottle or other fly which

floats down over a shoal is almost certain to be taken, despite the shoal's apparent disregard of superficial matters.

There is the expected ring, and almost simultaneously a gleam, as a fish on the bottom turns on its side. That gleam is a thing which the angler should look for whenever he is prospecting in strange waters. It is often possible to detect the presence of fish at a considerable depth, when there is no other sign of them, by the flash of light reflected from their scales as they turn. As that ingenious observer, Dr. Francis Ward, has recently shown in his remarkable book, "Marvels of Fish Life," when fish are on "an even keel" they are relatively invisible, as their scales act merely as a mirror of their surroundings, but once they are off the perpendicular their scales become a mirror of the light, and flash a message to expectant eyes.

The line is greased, and the cast is damp and ready for attachment. A 3-yard cast, tapering from fairly stout undrawn gut to fine drawn gut—3X or 4X—is the right thing for dace; they are rather shy of coarse tackle, so at least 1 yard of the cast should be of this latter strength. If it frays and gets weak with use, as it probably will, it is an easy matter to renew the last link or two. The heavier part of a cast will serve for a long time if it is treated properly. It should not be kept in a damping-box for days, as is sometimes done, or it gets rotten. The best damping-box in my opinion

is an india-rubber tobacco-pouch, and it is quite enough to dip the cast in water before you leave home and put it into the pouch. In a quarter of an hour, or even less, the gut will be quite soft and pliable. Some men have a piece of wet flannel or spongiopilene in the pouch, but I think that quite unnecessary. The india-rubber retains moisture well enough without assistance, and I believe that flannel has a worse effect on the gut. When you put your cast into the pouch, put in at the same time half a dozen strands of the 4X gut, so that they may be then soaked and ready for repairs when necessary.

Fig. 25.

The figure-eight knot (Fig. 25) is the best for fastening reel-line to gut-loop, but there are other

Fig. 26.

knots which serve, one of the simplest being also depicted in Fig. 26. We will put on that favourite fly, the Red Tag, and rather a large one to begin with, a No. 1. Dace are queer creatures, and sometimes a big fly catches bigger fish than a small one. At other times the tiniest fly you possess will not be small enough. As a rule, though, dry flies should be smaller than wet flies for dace-fishing.

It is about a 15-yard cast over to the willow root, and that is about as far as you ought ever to cast for dace when you can arrange matters to your liking. The nearer you can get to them, the better is your chance of hooking them when they rise. They are, as a rule, very quick to seize and reject a fly, and the angler must strike promptly. With a long line out it takes appreciably longer to strike, a thing which is of material profit to the fish. Cast the fly somewhat upstream of the willow, and let it travel along as far as the line will permit.

Now the Red Tag comes floating downstream past the root. It is very visible on the water, and looks not unlike a natural insect of some kind. At first it is wise for a beginner at dry-fly work to use a fly which he can see easily. He has to learn the game by watching the fly, seeing where it falls and how it behaves. After more experience he will find that dry-fly fishing is, to a great extent, a matter of knowing where your fly *ought to be*, and behaving accordingly. Some patterns are very hard to see, and if there is a ripple on the water you may not be able to detect the fall of the fly or its subsequent journey. In that case you have to proceed on the assumption that it was bound to fall in such a spot, and is bound to be travelling along such a line and at such a pace, and if you see a rise anywhere along that line at about the right moment, you strike in the expectation that the rise concerns

you. Very often the result justifies the train of argument.

Here, however, no such difficulty is present. Anyone could see that Red Tag. Anyone could also see that dimple as a fish comes up and mouths it. Don't strike; it was not a real rise, for, see, the fly is still floating down, a little disturbed, but not taken. If the fish had taken it, it would be no longer visible. Try another cast. Now there is no result, and the fly floats down past the root until it is well below us. Keep your rod still, and let the tightening line drag the fly across the stream, making a wake as it comes. There! a fish is after it, and you feel a decided pluck, though the hook does not go home.

Here you have an illustration of a fundamental difference between dry-fly fishing for trout and dry-fly fishing for coarse fish. On the trout stream you have by every conceivable means to guard against what is called "drag"—that is to say, the unnatural movement of your fly across or against the stream in obedience to the sagging of the line. With coarse fish drag hardly matters, and, indeed, it often serves as an attraction. Sometimes dace will only take a dry fly when it drags, and the same may be said of their relatives—chub, roach, and rudd. But it is prettier sport to catch them in the orthodox dry-fly way, so fishing your fly that it does not drag, and making allowance for the varying pace of the stream by your

manner of casting. To put it briefly, you overcome drag in most cases by having more line out than you need to reach the desired spot, and by utilizing the superfluity as a reserve for the fly to draw upon. The dry-fly man does not often cast what is called a "straight" line. His fly goes out straight, but by checking the point of his rod he causes his line to fall in curves on the water. The action of the stream straightens these out, and meanwhile the fly floats down

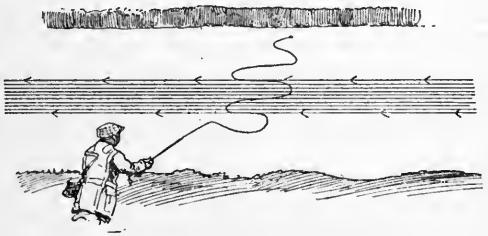

Fig. 27.—Overcoming Drag.

unimpeded. With a straight line it would probably begin to drag at once. A diagram shows more or less what I mean, but I am not going to labour the point, which is really of no very great importance in coarse fishing.

Instead, let us go on fishing. Again the Red Tag produces an abortive rise. Possibly it is too big for the humour of the fish to-day. Let us try a small Coachman. Those pretty little white wings and the lustrous herl body are sometimes much to the taste of coarse

fish. That is better, that rise, and a quick but gentle strike has hooked the fish. It is quite a good one, too, and it fights valiantly enough to make light handling necessary with such fine gut. But there is no real danger of a breakage if your tackle has survived the greatest danger, the moment of striking. The entry of the fish into the landing-net ought to be a certainty once it is well hooked.

Not far off ½ pound, this fellow. A dozen of this kind would make a dish of which you might well feel proud. A handsome fish, the dace, built on clean lines like a racing-skiff, and with a bright coat of its own. But if you compare this ½-pounder with a small one of about an ounce, you will notice that the big one is a little different in colouring. The baby is bright silver, like a new shilling; the older fish is silver too, but more like silver which has received a very thin coating of almost transparent varnish—there is just a hint of lemon-yellow in the white. I know no fish which has quite this colour, or suspicion of a colour, except a large dace.

Some of those sedges on the bottom of the creel will make a seemly bed for him, a bed on which he and his fellows, if we catch any, will look well. It may sound rather absurd, the consideration of how fish *look* in the basket, but it is not absurd really. It gives the angler a thrill of pleasure to note the contrast of silver and dark green, and thrills of pleasure are always precious.

Besides, the sight impresses other people; the fish look so much more important when they are well arranged.

Squeeze the fly in your handkerchief. It is draggled and wet, and will not float until it is dry again. When the water is squeezed out set its wings and hackle to rights, the wings standing jauntily up at the proper angle from each other, and the hackle well displayed at the neck. Then make four or five casts in the air to complete the drying, and have at the dace again.

Two more rather small ones are in the creel now, and rises have ceased. The reason probably is that the fish have moved away upstream. The capture of a fish or two often sends dace off. If you can find them, you can sometimes catch one or two more in the new place. Then off they go once more, and you must look for them again. But in a small, shallow stream like this they will not stand more than three or four attacks, and they get so shy that nothing more can be done with them. That is evidently what has happened here, and the two more that we have secured are all that we are likely to get out of this shoal. One is a ½-pounder, though, so we have done pretty well.

We will work gradually upstream towards the mill, trying a cast here and there, but with our main object the shallows at the tail of the mill-pool, where the wet fly will be worth trying. I said earlier that I thought the wet fly better for coarse fish, on the whole, than the

dry fly, and so it is. But you cannot safely dogmatize on such a matter.

There are some rivers on which I have found the wet fly less effective for dace, especially rivers where the fish are large. I know a stretch of the Kennet where the dace average over ½ pound. Three-quarter pound fish are common there, and at any time you may have a chance of a pounder. On that water they take a dry fly freely and without any of the "niggling" that dace display in some rivers. Also they upset one of the favourite theories of fishing writers, that dace *always* rise very sharply and reject the fly in an instant. These big fellows of the Kennet do no such thing. They rise with pomp and circumstance, take the fly in leisurely fashion, and retain it for a reasonable time. There is no need for the angler to strike quickly, and, indeed, if he does so he defeats his object. A man who had only experienced dace-fishing on that part of the Kennet would very justly come to the conclusion that dace, as a tribe, were fish of slow and thoughtful habit, much akin to the trout, which are their neighbours.

But let him remove himself and his rod to a different kind of water—the tidal Thames at Isleworth, for instance. Here he will find a different sort of dace—a fish which has risen, taken his fly, and left it, all in the space of time which a Kennet fish would require for the opening of its mouth. These Isleworth dace are smaller, of course, rarely attaining to a weight of

½ pound, and it is perhaps this that makes the difference. All fish become rather more dignified in their behaviour as they get bigger. Small dace are the rule in most rivers, and if small dace always rise quickly, as I think they do, that would explain the popular conception that all dace do so. There are scarcely half a dozen rivers in England which yield really big ones like those Kennet fish, but wherever you do find big ones, you will find that they rise pretty slowly. Our ½-pounders this morning needed no quick striking. All this bears to some extent on the question of dry or wet fly. For the big fish the dry fly is probably the better, because they take it sensibly and can be hooked without flurry; also, it is more likely to tempt them to rise. But for the small ones the wet fly pays best, is taken more boldly, and lends itself more to quick striking.

Now that we have come to the mill-pool, without much delay, because it is getting on for lunch-time, and the few casts we have made here and there have not been profitable, we will put on a couple of wet flies and try this other style of fishing for half an hour. A Black Gnat on the end of the cast and a Green Insect 2 feet 6 inches above it will do. The upper fly is called a "dropper." It is tied to a separate piece of gut, which is fastened to the cast above a knot. A loop in the gut of the fly is the best mode of fastening, and the dropper-link should be quite short—say 3 inches.

Were we seriously going to fish with wet fly for any length of time, the greased reel-line would be a mistake. A line which sinks is much more effective and pleasanter to use. For dace it might also well be lighter than the one that is on the reel. But it is possible to fish the fly wet even when the line floats, especially when there is a little ripple on the water, as there is here. One thing should be guarded against, the floating of the gut. Some grease is almost sure to have got on to the cast, and that has to be removed. The best way to insure the gut sinking is to pass it through a pinch of soft river mud, which takes the grease off nicely. Do this once or twice, but don't rub the gut hard or it will fray.

Now let us try a cast or two where the pool narrows and the stream begins to hasten over the gravel. I think the best plan is to cast somewhat downstream, hold the rod still, and let the flies drag round, or else to draw them slowly across. The dace will follow them just as they did the dry fly lower down, and a pluck will be felt whenever a fish actually touches one. Strike gently but quickly at every pluck, and you will find that now and then the pluck denotes a genuine rise, and you will hook your fish. Sometimes the rises can be seen and not felt, but generally by the time you see a commotion on the surface the serious business is over, and only tail-wagging remains before the dace retires.

Five plucks, and at last a fish hooked—that is about the

usual proportion unless the fish are taking very well. It is a 3-ounce dace, and that is a fair specimen for Thames fishing. If you keep nothing under this size, and have two dozen to show at the end of the day, of which a few reach 6 ounces, you will have done quite well. Some of the experts on Thames shallows will occasionally get four or five dozen dace in a day, or even more, but a good many will not be much over the size-limit prescribed by the by-laws, which is 6 inches,* and a 6-inch dace does not weigh more than about an ounce. A good sample of Thames dace would run from 8 inches to 10 inches in length.

Our half-hour is up, and it has not been unprofitable, though none of the five fish we have kept weighs more than ¼ pound. But with the other five they make a nice little show in the creel, and we can go home content. We have also proved satisfactorily that a summer morning with the dace is full of interest, and that it gives delicate sport such as the most eclectic soul need not despise.

* As this goes to press there is a prospect of the Thames size-limit being raised to 7 inches.

CHAPTER VII

CARP AND TENCH

For practical purposes there are big carp and small carp. The latter you may sometimes hope to catch without too great a strain on your capacities. The former—well, men have been known to catch them, and there are just a few anglers who have caught a good many. I myself have caught one, and I will make bold to repeat the tale of the adventure as it was told in the *Field* of July 1, 1911. The narrative contains most of what I know concerning the capture of big carp. The most important thing in it is the value which it shows to reside in a modicum of good luck. So far as my experience goes, it is certain that good luck is the most vital part of the equipment of him who would seek to slay big carp. For some men I admit the usefulness of skill and pertinacity; for myself, I take my stand entirely on luck. To the novice I would say: "Cultivate your luck. Prop it up with omens and signs of good purport. Watch for magpies on your path. Form the habit of avoiding

old women who squint. Throw salt over your left shoulder. Touch wood with the forefinger of your right hand whenever you are not doing anything else. Be on friendly terms with a black cat. Turn your money under the new moon. Walk round ladders. Don't start on a Friday. Stir the materials for Christmas pudding and wish. Perform all other such rites as you know or hear of. These things are important in carp-fishing."

And so to my story.

"I had intended to begin this story in a much more subtle fashion, and only by slow degrees to divulge the purport of it, delaying the finale as long as possible, until it should burst upon a bewildered world like the last crashing bars of the 1812 Overture. But I find that, like Ennius (though without his justification for a somewhat assured proceeding), *volito vivus per ora virum*. Now that a considerable section of the daily Press has taken cognisance of the event, it is no good my delaying the modest confession that I have caught a large carp. It is true. But it is a slight exaggeration to state that the said carp was decorated with a golden ring bearing the words, 'Me valde dilexit atque ornavit propter immensitatem meam Isaachius Walton, anno Domini MDCLIII.' Nor was it the weightiest carp ever taken. Nor was it the weightiest carp of the present season. Nor was it the weightiest carp of June 24. Nor did I deserve it. But enough of nega-

tion. Let me to the story, which will explain the whole of it.

"To begin with, I very nearly did not go at all, because it rained furiously most of the morning. To continue, when towards noon the face of the heavens showed signs of clearness and my mind swiftly made itself up that I would go after all, I carefully disentangled the sturdy rod and the strong line, the triangle-hooks, and the other matters that had been prepared the evening before, and started armed with roach-tackle. The loss of half a day had told me that it was vain to think of big carp. You cannot, of course, fish for big carp in half a day. It takes a month. So subtle are these fishes that you have to proceed with the utmost precautions. In the first week, having made ready your tackle and plumbed the depth, you build yourself a wattled screen, behind which you may take cover. By the second week the fish should have grown accustomed to this, and you begin to throw in ground-bait composed of bread, bran, biscuits, peas, beans, strawberries, rice, pearl barley, aniseed cake, worms, gentles, banana, and potato. This ground-baiting must not be overdone. Half a pint on alternate evenings is as much as can safely be employed in this second week. With the third week less caution is necessary, because by now the carp will be less mindful of the adage concerning those who come bearing gifts. You may bear gifts

daily, and the carp will, it is to be hoped, in a manner of speaking, look these gifts in the mouth—as carp should. Now, with the fourth week comes the critical time. All is very soon to be put to the touch.

"On Monday you lean your rod (it is ready put up, you remember) on the wattled fence so that its top projects 18 inches over the water. On Tuesday you creep up and push it gently, so that the 18 inches are become 4 feet. The carp, we hope, simply think that it is a piece of the screen growing well, and take no alarm. On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday you employ the final and great ruse. This is to place your line (the depth has already been plumbed, of course) gently in the water, the bullet just touching the bottom so that the float cocks, and the 2 feet of gut which lie on the bottom beyond it terminating with a bait in which is no fraudful hook. This so that the carp may imagine that it is just a whim of the lavish person behind the screen (be sure they know you are there all the time) to tie food to some fibrous yet innocuous substance. And at last, on Saturday, the 31st of the month, you fall to angling, while the morning mists are still disputing with the shades of night. Now there is a hook within the honey paste, and woe betide any carp which loses its head. But no carp does lose its head until the shades of night are disputing with the mists of evening. Then, from your post of observation (50 yards behind the

screen), you hear a click, click, which tells you that your reel revolves. A carp has made off with the bait, drawn out the 5 yards of line coiled carefully on the ground, and may now be struck. So you hasten up and strike. There is a monstrous pull at the rod-point, something pursues a headlong course into the unknown depths, and after a few thrilling seconds there is a jar, a slackness of line, and you wind up sorrowfully. You are broken, and so home.

"I mention these things by way of explaining why I had never before caught a really big carp, and also why I do not deserve one now. As I have said, I took with me to Cheshunt Lower Reservoir roach-tackle, a tin of small worms, and an intention to try for perch, with just a faint hope of tench. The natural condition of the water is weed, the accumulated growth of long years. When I visited it for the first time some eight years ago I could see nothing but weed, and that was in mid-winter. Now, however, the Highbury Anglers, who have rented the reservoir, have done wonders towards making it fishable. A good part of the upper end is clear, and elsewhere there are pitches cut out which make excellent feeding-grounds for fish and angling-grounds for men. Prospecting, I soon came to the forked sticks, which have a satisfying significance to the ground-bait-less angler. Someone else has been there before, and the new-comer may perchance reap the benefit of another man's sowing. So I sat me down on an empty box

thoughtfully provided and began to angle. It is curious how great, in enclosed waters especially, is the affinity between small worms and small perch. For two hours I struggled to teach a shoal of small perch that hooks pull them distressfully out of the water. It was in vain. Walton must have based his 'wicked of the world' illustration on the ways of small perch. I had returned about twenty and was gloomily observing my float begin to bob again when a cheery voice, that of Mr. R. G. Woodruff, behind me observed that I ought to catch something in that swim. I had certainly fulfilled the obligation; but it dawned on me that he was not speaking of small perch, and then that my rod was resting on the forked stick and myself on the wooden box of the hon. secretary of the Anglers' Association. He almost used force to make me stay where I was, but who was I to occupy a place carefully baited for carp, and what were my insufficient rod and flimsy line that they should offer battle to 10-pounders? Besides, there was tea waiting for me, and I had had enough of small perch.

"So I made way for the rightful owner of the pitch, but not before he had given me good store of big lob-worms, and also earnest advice at any rate to try for carp with them, roach-rod or no roach-rod. He told me of a terrible battle of the evening before, when a monster took his worm in the dark and also his cast and hook. Whether it travelled north or south he

could hardly tell in the gloom, but it travelled far and successfully. He hoped that after the rain there might be a chance of a fish that evening. Finally, I was so far persuaded that during tea I looked out a strong cast and a perch-hook on fairly stout gut, and soaked them in the teapot till they were stained a light brown. Then, acquiring a loaf of bread by good fortune, I set out to fish. There were plenty of other forked sticks here and there which showed where other members had been fishing, and I finally decided on a pitch at the lower end, which I remembered from the winter as having been the scene of an encounter with a biggish pike that got off after a considerable fight. There, with a background of trees and bushes, some of whose branches made handling a 14-foot rod rather difficult, it is possible to sit quiet and fairly inconspicuous. And there accordingly I sat for three hours and a quarter, watching a float which only moved two or three times when a small perch pulled the tail of the lobworm, and occupying myself otherwise by making pellets of paste and throwing them out as ground-bait.

"Though fine, it was a decidedly cold evening, with a high wind; but this hardly affected the water, which is entirely surrounded by a high bank and a belt of trees. Nor was there much to occupy attention except when a great fish would roll over in the weeds far out, obviously one of the big carp, but 100 yards away. An occasional moorhen and a few rings made

by small roach were the only other signs of life. The black tip of my float about 8 yards away, in the dearth of other interests, began to have an almost hypnotizing influence. A little after half-past eight this tip trembled and then disappeared, and so intent was I on looking at it that my first thought was a mild wonder as to why it did that. Then the coiled line began to go through the rings, and I realized that here was a bite. Rod in hand, I waited till the line drew taut, and struck gently. Then things became confused. It was as though some submarine suddenly shot out into the lake. The water was about 6 feet deep, and the fish must have been near the bottom, but he made a most impressive wave as he dashed straight into the weeds about 20 yards away, and buried himself some 10 yards deep in them. 'And so home,' I murmured to myself, or words of like significance, for I saw not the faintest chance of getting a big fish out with a roach-rod and a fine line. After a little thought, I decided to try hand-lining, as one does for trout, and, getting hold of the line—with some difficulty, because the trees prevented the rod-point going far back—I proceeded to feel for the fish with my hand. At first there was no response; the anchorage seemed immovable.

"Then I thrilled to a movement at the other end of the line, which gradually increased until the fish was on the run again, pushing the weeds aside as he went, but carrying a great streamer or two with him on the line.

His run ended, as had the first, in another weed-patch, and twice after that he seemed to have found safety in the same way. Yet each time hand-lining was efficacious, and eventually I got him out into the strip of clear water, where the fight was an easier affair, though by no means won. It took, I suppose, from fifteen to twenty minutes before I saw a big bronze side turn over, and was able to get about half the fish into my absurdly small net. Luckily, by this time he had no kick left in him, and I dragged him safely up the bank and fell upon him. What he weighed I had no idea, but I put him at about 12 pounds, with a humble hope that he might be more. At any rate, he had made a fight that would have been considered very fair in a 12-pound salmon, the power of his runs being certainly no less and the pace of them quite as great. On the tackle I was using, however, a salmon would have fought longer.

"The fish knocked on the head, I was satisfied, packed up my tackle, and went off to see what the other angler had done. So far he had not had a bite, but he meant to go on as long as he could see, and hoped to meet me at the train. He did not do so, for a very good reason: he was at about that moment engaged in a grim battle in the darkness with a fish that proved ultimately to be 1 ounce heavier than mine, which, weighed on the scales at the keeper's cottage, was 16 pounds 5 ounces. As I owe him my fish, because it was by his advice I

put on the strong cast, and the bait was one of his lob-worms, he might fairly claim the brace. And he would deserve them, because he is a real carp-fisher, and has taken great pains to bring about his success. For myself—well, luck attends the undeserving now and then. One of them has the grace to be thankful."

So much for what I know about catching big carp. In *fishing* for them, however, I am somewhat better instructed. I can number a good many solemn days spent in the business, and I can recall just a few bites, which invariably preceded calamity. Once, I remember, a stout new grilse-cast parted in the middle owing to the exertions of a great fish which seized a small potato. Probably there was a flaw in the gut, but I was not aware of it, and till I caught the carp of my story I assumed that breakage was the natural sequel to hooking a fish of over 10 pounds. I went in terror of these fish.

Terror, however, adds a zest to angling, and carp-fishing has always made a strong appeal to me. There is a placidity about it which you find in no other kind of angling. Having laid out your rods (you may just as well use two while you are about it, with a different bait on each), you are at liberty to smoke, meditate, read, and even, I think, to sleep, if all goes well. Nothing will happen to disturb you. You and the rods and the floats gradually grow into the landscape and become a part of it. It is like life in the isle of

the lotus. But to enjoy it to the full you must have something comfortable on which to sit. A box that has held ginger-beer bottles is to be commended. It is of the right height, and though harder than a camp-stool, is more spacious.

In some places, however, you cannot be quite free from care if you use worm or paste. The worm, as I have shown, does not escape the attentions of ridiculous little perch. Paste attracts a shoal of absurd roachlets. It is a case of nibble, nibble, nibble, all day with the paste, and of constant laborious swallowings of the worm. The only time when you are relieved from the trouble is when big carp are actually on the prowl. If about sundown all bites and nibblings cease and the floats remain unmoved, take heart of grace. Probably this means that there are two or three monstrous carp stealthily devouring your ground-bait, and you *may* get a bite that *is* a bite. When big fish begin to move little fish are awed into quiescence.

The bait which gives you immunity from small perch and roach is potato—a small new potato boiled till it is fairly soft and stripped of half its brown skin, so as to show white on the bottom. Bream are fond of potato at times, but I know no other fish which will dispute with carp for its possession. Where there are no bream your small potato will lie undisturbed for ever, unless a carp comes across it and takes it. Most men use a triangle in potato-fishing, pulling it through the

bait with a baiting-needle until it is buried and hidden. A single hook ought to serve just as well so far as hooking the fish goes, but the potato is held better by the triangle if you have to cast it out any distance.

French carp-fishers seem to use beans more than any bait, the large dry white beans which you get at a grocer's. They boil them with a flavoursome mixture of herbs, etc. (wheat, fennel, hempseed, thyme, and honey), until they are soft and plump, and use them both for ground-bait and the hook. I have never tried beans myself, but I can imagine that they might answer very well, and that little fish would not worry them any more than they worry potato. An interesting account of the French method appeared in the *Field* of August 12, 1911.

For ground-bait a mixture of bread, bran, and potato ought to be all that is required, and if you can keep a place baited up for some days before you fish, so much the better. Most of the stock hook-baits are effective with carp at times—worms, wasp grubs, gentles, and paste, all being to the taste of the fish. Some anglers also recommend vegetable baits, such as green peas and macaroni. With smaller carp—fish from 1½ to about 4 pounds—I have found paste as good a bait as any, and I like to have it sweetened by the addition of a little honey.

It is these smaller carp that give the angler most chance of sport, for they are not so hopelessly cunning

as the big fellows, nor are they so uncertain in their feeding. There are plenty of ponds where you can make quite respectable catches of the smaller carp by taking a little trouble about it, and the fishing is by no means to be despised.

Carp are very apt to drop a bait if anything arouses their suspicion after they have seized it, and therefore the advice given by all fishing writers, that as little lead as may be should be used on the line, is very sound. If the necessity to cast out a long way, or to keep the bait still despite stream or wind, makes a good deal of lead imperative, then it should be of such a nature that the line will run through it freely—either a bullet with a good big hole drilled through it, or a paternoster lead with a fairly large ring. In either case a small split-shot will prevent the lead from slipping farther down the line than it should. I think it ought to be at least 2 feet from the hook, and it should just touch the bottom so that these 2 feet lie along the ground. In some cases where you have to cast a long way it may be better to use a leger, and in that case the bullet or lead should be on the reel-line, 3 feet of gut below it being enough. Some anglers get over the lead trouble ingeniously by squeezing a lump of stiff ground-bait on to a couple of split shot, and using that as the weight to carry out their line. It is not easy to throw, but, once thrown, of course it serves a double purpose: it has carried the line out, and it attracts the fish.

A carp sometimes bites very deliberately, and plenty of time should be given to him before one strikes. The rod is never held in the hand, and as a rule 2 or 3 yards of line are pulled off the reel and coiled on the ground, so that if a fish goes off with the bait he may feel no suspicious check. When the slack line is nearly drawn through the rings, the angler picks up the rod and strikes.

Early morning and late evening are the times usually recommended to the carp-fisher, but I am not at all sure that the best fishing is not in the early part of the night, from the coming of darkness till midnight. At dusk the fish begin to roam in search of food, and in a lake they will cruise about among the weeds and reeds close in-shore. Often, just at dusk, you can see the tips of the reeds swaying as some softly moving fish, perhaps of great size, makes its way through them. And when the light is gone you can hear rustlings, and sucking noises, and an occasional great splash, which are somewhat alarming. Night-fishing, indeed, is full of alarms, for there are noises all about, on the bank as well as on the water. It is just as well to have a good conscience if you are going to do much night-fishing.

Seeing one's float becomes increasingly difficult as the light gets less, and after a time no ordinary float is visible at all, even though its head be black. For this emergency keep a few black feathers, and fasten one to

the tip of each float by means of india-rubber float-caps. Four or five inches of black feather standing up from the water are visible so long as there is any light on it at all, showing as a dark patch against what is less dark. On some summer nights one could see a feather through all the dark hours by adjusting one's angle of vision according to the shadows on the water. If you get a bite and the float is under water for any time, the feather may get bedraggled and useless. If it were lightly touched with oil beforehand it would stand immersion better.

The question of gut is decidedly important in carp-fishing. The carp themselves prefer fine gut, but where you are likely to get hold of a big one, I should advise you to disregard their preference. If you use fine-drawn gut and hook a 10-pounder, you will be broken. If you use strong sea-trout or grilse-gut you may not get a bite, but if you do you ought not to be broken. Those are the alternatives. For night-fishing it does not matter how strong, in reason, the gut is. In the daytime you can neutralize the visibility of strong gut by staining it in the teapot for a few minutes. It comes out a sort of dirty-brown colour which is quite inconspicuous against the bottom of a lake or river. This is a good and valid reason for having at least 2 feet of gut lying on the said bottom. A bait hanging from an upright string must look suspicious to any fish of intelligence such as the carp possesses, but when the string lies on the

ground there is nothing to distinguish it from a bit of weed or fibre, of which the water holds plenty.

The only other method of carp-fishing which is of any account is using a bait on the surface. I have caught a certain number of smaller carp by surface-fishing, and I do not see why it should not account for big ones too. If you study the habits of carp which are accustomed to being fed—in such a place as the Regent's Park lake, for instance—you will notice that they take very kindly to fragments of bread which float and escape the ducks and other water-fowl. A big piece of bread is very soon surrounded by a crowd of small fish, roach probably, which chase it about, nibble its edges, jostle each other, and generally have a good time. Of a sudden, however, a burly form forces its way through them, the little fish scatter, and then the bread is absorbed in quite a swirl. That is a carp telling you how he may be caught.

In warm weather carp swim near the surface, and it does not take long to call their attention to floating bread—the crowd of lesser fishes will soon do that. If you can once induce them to feed on bits of bread, and can then float a piece with a hook in it out to them, you have an excellent chance of sport.

The chief trouble is getting your bait out without having the hook stripped by small roach, and the other trouble is getting it out at all. The first difficulty may be met by using a piece of bread-crust, which is tough enough to resist a good deal of worrying, but not so

tough as to be unattractive. Toast might do even better. The next difficulty is met by using a very light reel-line, greased so that it will float, and by having a breeze at your back which will carry the bread out into the lake. If the breeze is but slight, you can make a sailing-vessel out of a dry leaf. Hitch your cast in it, and it will carry your bait and line as far as you like; and if a fish should take the bait, the leaf will shake clear of the line when it moves.

I have not yet had an opportunity of trying this manœuvre over really big carp, because when other things have been favourable the wind has been lacking, and when the wind has been present other things have not been favourable. The fish must be near the surface to make the fishing worth while. A time, I hope, will come, and meanwhile I commend the idea to others for what it is worth.

Tench fishing is usually as restful and productive a pastime as carp fishing, which, after what I have already said, may not seem to be much of a recommendation. The small-scaled, golden-olive fish with the ruby eye has many points of resemblance to the carp, and ability to resist the angler's importunities is one of them. I know plenty of waters where tench abound, but hardly ever give any sport, and even in places where the fish have a better reputation you cannot depend on catching one, much less several.

On the other hand, now and again people come in

for a really big day, and a bag of twenty, thirty, or even more tench, all over 2 pounds, is quite within the bounds of the possible. I think a hot summer improves the tench fisher's chance, and I am quite sure that discreet ground-baiting is the secret of success, and there is nothing so good for this purpose as worms. Which is a pity, because, as I have hinted earlier, worms in bulk are rather expensive.

I prefer marsh-worms to any others for tench as a general rule, but quite big lob worms are to their taste sometimes, and at other times small brandlings answer better. Tench do not, so far as I know, ever lie about near the surface like carp, so there is no question of catching them with a floating bait. You have to seek them very much on the bottom.

Similar tackle and methods to those employed for carp do for tench, but one should use somewhat finer gut. The fish do not often reach a greater weight than about 4 pounds, and fine undrawn or even once drawn gut is strong enough to cope with fish of that size unless the weeds are very bad. This is often the case, because tench seem to prefer weedy places. There, of course, you must use gut which you think will be strong enough to pull them out of weed beds if necessary, bearing in mind the fact that tench are powerful fish.

Some waters are, indeed, so overgrown that it seems impossible to fish them. In such a case, the only course is to clear a few places of weed, small holes, say, three

or four yards square. If you make yourself pitches of this kind and throw worms into them now and again, you are sure to catch some tench sooner or later. The longer and more regularly you bait a pitch before actually fishing it, the more likely are you to catch something when you do begin.

Sometimes tench bite boldly enough, but on other days they seem simply to toy with the bait. You see your float giving little twitches from time to time, and this may go on for fifteen or twenty minutes. Whether it means that one tench is playing about the bait all this time, or whether it implies a shoal of them, inquisitive but not hungry, I do not know. I rather suspect a shoal. Now and then the twitches will culminate in a real bite and the float will sail slowly off, but more often they simply dwindle away into nothing.

If you cannot get worms, tench may be approached with paste, sweetened or plain, with wasp grub, gentles, and other roach baits, but, as a rule, you will only get an odd fish with these things. The big catches are almost always made with worms. But it is possible that, as with barbel, we have not exhausted our powers of experiment. I remember reading that that well-known Thames angler, Mr. A. E. Hobbs, of Henley, once made a fine basket of tench by using fresh-water snails as bait. This is decidedly suggestive of new possibilities.

Though most tench fishing is done in the hot months

July, August, and September, and though these fish have a reputation of hibernating during the winter, they sometimes bite with freedom in late February and early March, at any rate in rivers. In some parts of the Thames the last month of the coarse-fishing season is looked upon as the best month for tench, provided that the weather is mild. Slow-flowing, or almost stagnant stretches at the edge of rush-beds are the most likely parts of a river to try, and as there is always mud near such places, it may well be that the theory as to tench burying themselves in mud during the winter is well founded. Possibly they come out to feed occasionally, reburying themselves when they have dined.

The willingness of the tench to adapt itself to circumstances is proverbial. It will live and apparently thrive in the most absurd places. Most old anglers have memories of tench fishing in some duck pond or other. I caught my first tench in a place about 20 yards square, which was nowhere more than 4 feet deep. It was literally packed with fish, and they bit with an enthusiasm which I have, unhappily, not noticed among tench since. It is true they were not very big, but I got a few from 1 pound to 1½ pounds, and it is quite possible that there may have been heavier fish there. At any rate, I have often heard strange tales of 3-pounders caught in puddles.

Tench, like carp, are worthy of effort, because they are hard to catch, and game antagonists when hooked,

and because the pursuit of them involves blissful, quiet hours beside summer waters. They bite best about daybreak, and late in the evening, but you may catch them even at midday. And if you have baited your swim thoroughly you are not unlikely to catch perch as well, and even a big carp. There is a pleasing as well as an unpleasing uncertainty about tench fishing.

CHAPTER VIII

BREAM

I HAVE a respect for the bream. I make this simple statement because many men have no respect for him, and do not hesitate to say so. We must speak, of course, as we have found, and it may be that those men have had unpleasing experience of him, and that their memories are chiefly of slime. I must admit the slime, for, with the exception of the eel, there is no fresh-water fish more prodigal of that embarrassment. You will find in some writers advice as to aprons and dusters and other protective measures for bream-fishing, and if you are going to do your bream-fishing on the grand scale, you will perhaps be well counselled if you pay heed to it.

The grand scale is bream-fishing as it is to be found in the Norfolk Broad district. There you reckon your spoils by the stone, and have sacks in which to bestow them. The fun, while it lasts—sometimes it lasts for quite a long time—is fast and furious; but, speaking for my own part, it is a kind of fishing of which it is

soon possible to have had enough. I prefer bream-fishing in a deep, slow river, where one does not catch so many fish, but where there is more mystery in the angling and more excitement about each bite and battle as they come.

One of the great merits of the bream is that he makes us arise betimes. When the extremely sensible Daylight Saving Bill is passed, possibly human beings will become less of nocturnal animals perforce. Till it is passed we ought to value such small inducements as we have to see how things look in the unfamiliar early hours. The bream is decidedly one of these inducements, because he feeds best while men ordinarily sleep. Some men say that he bites before sunrise, and doubtless they are right; but in the days when I used to do a great deal of morning bream-fishing (I am sorry to say that, at present, I find my customs waiting upon the passage of Mr. Willett's Bill) I never used to do much good before sunrise. The moment the sun made himself felt as a factor in the day I was wont to expect bites. It was not needful for him to bring warmth, but only light. The mists of morning had to begin to glow with opal fires before they melted, and the day to take on a subdued radiance which it knows at no other hour.

It may be that the exceeding beauty of the world in the first flush of sunrise made me optimistic, and that not expecting bites till then had something to do with

bites not coming—a man's moods have more to do with his success in fishing than he may realize. Anglers of better balance may fish with just as much confidence before sunrise, even though the grey ghostly sky gives them no hint as to what sort of day it is going to be, or even whether it is going to turn to rain what time the sun should appear—a very distressing beginning to a day, let me tell you, if you are sitting somewhat chilly by a river and hoping for the sun. Possibly those are the anglers whose experience leads to the dictum that bream begin to feed at the first sign of coming light. My experience, as I have said, was different, and perhaps I have given a reason for it.

My equipment for that early-morning fishing may be described, as it may serve both as an instruction and a warning. First there was a long cane rod of about 17 feet with a 4-inch Nottingham reel, which was very well. Next there was a flimsy Japanese cane rod of 14 feet with no reel, but a horsehair cast attached to its tip, and this was not at all well. The number of big fish which were hooked on that absurd tackle, and which went lightly away with a hook and more or less horsehair, was beyond reason. I ought to have acquired wisdom from it. But we had a sort of tradition that it was a magnificent thing to fish with a single-hair tight line, and to take the chances. Moreover, the theory was that the little rod was intended to catch roach, while the big one, with its strong gut and larger

hook, was for the bream. If the bream had known the theory all might have been well. Of course, now and then I would land quite a large fish on the little rod, and be mightily pleased about it, so perhaps that gave the pernicious tight-line method a longer claim on my affections. I would not employ it now for worlds.

Besides the rods, there were a campstool, a big landing-net on a long handle, a bucket two-thirds full of ground-bait (usually bread and bran, with occasional additions in the shape of stewed wheat, potato, or "sharps"), and hook-baits of different kinds—worms, gentles, potato, bread-paste, and sometimes stewed wheat or wasp-grub. All these things are to the taste of bream, but I never, in that river, found any so good as the paste. Fellow-anglers in the district used to get good catches on cubes of soft-boiled potato and wheat (three grains on a smallish hook), but I never did very much with anything but paste. It was surprising how large a piece would attract a bream. I often fished with a lump as big as a partridge's egg. Not seldom, too, even a roach would make an effort, and get one of these lumps into its mouth. Usually it would be over a pound, which we accounted a big one in that river.

The ground-bait was thrown in generously in big balls. Sometimes, when circumstances or laziness had interfered with the preparation of a due supply, I used to tie half a small loaf to half a brick and drop that in

to act as ground-bait. It used to serve the purpose quite well enough, and I can imagine cases in which it might answer better than the ordinary mixture of bread and bran. If in a rather strong stream one wanted to bait a rather small clear space among weeds, the weighted half-loaf would be a handy device. It might have its drawbacks, of course. I remember a beginner, to whom I had suggested the idea, complaining rather bitterly that he had had a bite, and had spent a long time in playing some heavy fish which kept very deep and showed little activity. In the end he discovered that he was playing his ground-bait, which he had hooked by the string which tied it to its brick. It was a disappointment to him.

The river in which we used to do our fishing was one of very dignified behaviour. Except just below a weir it never hurried itself, and as it was mostly 8 feet deep or more quite close to the bank, it was admirably suited to bream-fishing, in which it is advantageous to keep your bait on one spot. Fishing the swim as one does for roach will sometimes succeed with bream, but more often tight-corking is the method that pays.

Very pleasant it is, too, to sit in comfort with the rods propped on the sedges or forked sticks, and to wait for the leisurely bites which ought to come sooner or later. A bream does not hurry himself, nor when he has seized a bait is he very quick to let it go. There is usually ample time to pick up the rod and prepare to

strike when the float has gone under and away. Before and between bites one has leisure for that contemplation of Nature which is traditionally part of the angler's joy. As a matter of fact, it is not every kind of fishing which gives one enough leisure to take this enjoyment to the full. Most kinds absorb one's hands and eyes too much.

Bream, tench, and carp, are the fish that justify the epithet "contemplative" as applied to the business of catching them, and of the three the bream makes the smallest demand on patience. With carp, and often with tench, the contemplation constitutes the chief part of the fishing. With bream it should be no more than a reasonable part; for, though there is waiting, you may justly expect that the fish will feed at some time unless the conditions are hopelessly unfavourable.

Just as, in the fishing I describe, the smaller rod was inadequate, so was the bigger rod somewhat more than adequate. It used to be furnished with very strong gut, a huge swan-quill float with a strip of cork round its neck, and split-shot or bullets in proportion. Perhaps that was why the bream showed so marked a preference for biting at the other line—in fact, of course it was. Later I have learned that you do not need exceptional gear for bream. Rustic anglers, it is true, employ very strong stuff, but they do most of their bream-fishing when the light is dim or at night, and often they use no reel, pulling out their 3-pounders by sheer force.

The angler who deprecates trials of brute strength may very well use reasonably fine undrawn gut for early-morning or evening fishing, and he will find that a big bream on such tackle makes a fight which is not to be despised. Possibly more bream would be caught on stout stuff, because they could be landed quicker; but, after all, one does not want to make huge catches. We used to think it a very good morning's work if we had five or six bream averaging 2½ pounds, while ten or twelve fish of that weight would make a memorable day. For a river my standard would be much the same now, and I do not think anyone ought to complain of such sport. In the Broads I have once or twice made much larger bags, but the experience has not made me desire a great number of fish as a general thing. There is a certain monotony about fishing in the Broads. Though you may get a large number of bream, you are not likely to get a very big one. I never caught anything much over 3½ pounds there. But in a good bream river you may get something of 6 pounds, or even more, and that would be worth many smaller ones.

Bream are essentially bottom feeders, so the bait for them should be well on the bottom. I like to have my lead—a pierced bullet—just touching the bottom, and the hook at least 18 inches away from it. All the intervening gut lies on the ground. The float and lead should be suited to the strength of the current. If there is much stream a heavier lead will be required to

hold the bottom than if there is little, and the size of the float will depend chiefly on that. As a rule, a bullet about $\frac{1}{3}$ inch in diameter is quite big enough.

I have said that in old days bread-paste was the bait which I found to answer best, and since then I have not had much reason to alter my opinion of it materially, except in Norfolk, where worms were decidedly more effective. Elsewhere I have continued to use paste, varying it now and then with stiff ground-bait, which seems good at times. It has not, however, quite the reason for attractiveness when lying on the bottom that it has when used in fishing a roach-swim, where, as I have said earlier, it gradually melts as it swims, and the fragments of it are a perpetual stimulus to the fish.

In Norfolk worms served me best—lobworms when the bream were feeding eagerly, brandlings when they were less enthusiastic, but still not wholly fasting. Norfolk Broad fishing differs somewhat from deep-river fishing. Often you have to angle in very shallow water; and as bream are shy fish, intolerant of any kind of unusual disturbance, such as the approach or rolling of a boat, it follows that to reach them you have to cast your bait a long way. I used to find that the best plan was to paddle as quietly as possible to a chosen pitch, to throw in the ground-bait as far away from the boat as was conveniently to be done—say 20 to 25 yards—and then to wait until there were some signs of the fish having found it and begun to feed. Those signs were strings

of small bubbles making their way up to the surface as the bream nosed about on the soft mud.

When feeding had begun, a lobworm below a biggish float carrying a proportionate amount of lead was thrown to the right spot, and it was strange if a bite did not soon follow. With the hook at such a distance from the rod, the sinking of the line is apt to be a grave prejudice to striking, and it is well, therefore, to grease the line with gishurstine, or some other substance that will make it float. The dry-fly man's line preparations will any of them do for the purpose. Also, unless you can cast a light weight from the reel with some accuracy, it is better to use a dressed than an undressed line, which will make it possible to cast from the coil.

Either in the Broads or anywhere else it is, of course, possible to use a leger for bream. It is less trouble than float-fishing if the swim is some distance off, and I have found it no less effective. You should not strike too soon when you feel a fish at the bait, but ease the point of the rod till the line is drawn taut through the leger-lead. To the hand a bream-bite feels like a slow, strong drag rather than a jerk or tug.

It is rather commonly believed that bream do not feed in the middle of the day, but this is far from being the case. They do not, perhaps, bite with the abandon of early morning, but they *will* bite even under a burning sun and in clear water. For midday bream-fishing in summer, however, you want much finer tackle, and

roach hooks and gut, or even single hair, are not a bit too inconspicuous. My ancient equipment would have done very well for the business had it only been reinforced by an easy-running reel and a good many yards of fine line. When you can give him line a fight with a 4-pound bream on a single hair is a thrilling thing, and there is no reason why it should not end in favour of the rod. For this midday fishing I have sometimes found brandlings, two on a hook at once, or even three if they were small, a killing bait. Gentles are also deadly now and then. Of them half a dozen or more may be used at once.

One of the commonest remarks with regard to bream in fishing books deals with their manner of causing a float to lie flat on the water when they first take the bait. Curiously enough, this has not often happened to my float when big fish have been feeding, though it has occurred now and again. But with small bream, roach, and bleak, I have found it happen frequently. It means that the fish has seized the bait and raised it from the bottom, at the same time raising the shot and taking the weight off the float. With big fish my usual experience has been that the float has gone very slowly but quite steadily under and away.

One thing which I seem to have noticed in the way in which bream feed may be worth mentioning. I believe that they wander a good deal in their feeding, browsing over an extent of river-bed much as cattle

browse over an extent of meadow, but moving more quickly. Thus it may happen that when a shoal is busy with the ground-bait you will get two or three bites, and perhaps as many fish, in quick succession, and then nothing more will happen. This, I think, does not denote that the bream have stopped feeding, but rather that they have moved on somewhere else. If you throw in some more ground-bait and give them time they will probably come back, and presently you will catch some more. Like most fish which wander as they feed, I think they keep to a definite beat or circle, and will be at the same spot several times in the course of a meal, though they may not be there continuously. This thought makes perseverance seem better worth while.

As a general rule hooks varying from No. 7 to No. 9 are best for bream, according to the size and nature of your bait; but roach-hooks, No. 10 to No. 12, are quite big enough if you want to fish as fine as you can.

CHAPTER IX

CHUB IN SUMMER AND WINTER

Summer

If you go along by the mill, past the mill-pool, cross the bridge at the lock, and then follow the right bank of the river for about 100 yards, you come to a sort of sluggish and unattractive-looking brook, which listlessly joins the main stream. It is closely barricaded with willows and thorn-bushes, and if you go up it a little way and peer through them, you see a widish spread of shallow water, a muddy bottom, and perhaps two or three tiny chub cruising about in a dispirited manner. There is a good piece of this sort of water, perhaps 100 yards of it, before you come to the bridge over which the cart-track runs to the mill from some distant farm. It is all shallow, and muddy, and hopeless, and you are to be forgiven if you turn haughtily away and go back to the mill-pool or the weir-pool, where, at any rate, there is room for fish of reasonable size.

But if you are still for exploring and are not quite disillusioned as to the brook's possibilities, you will perhaps get over or through the hedge that shades the cart-track, and will find yourself in a great meadow with the stream meandering along its western side. Then you will go to look at the water, and you will be surprised. It is narrower, but, behold! it is deep, and it even has an appreciable current. Surely there may be some fish worth catching here after all.

Fig. 28.—Chub-Fly, with Tail of White Kid.

Let us go cautiously along and see, keeping this big Alder with its tail of white kid ready for emergencies. Walk very slowly and tread light, and keep your eyes earnestly on the stream. With this blazing sun and clear sky, we shall see anything there is to be seen. Very cautiously round this corner. There! drop on one knee. Do you see it? Just where that bush dips into the water, a dark shape like a log hanging in the stream. Drop your fly just to the right of it. It's on the bush, but that doesn't matter; twitch it gently off, and let it fall into the water like a caterpillar. Now you can see. The log turns, it opens its mouth—ah, you struck too quickly! These aren't trout, and you mustn't be in a hurry. Never mind, that's not the only chance.

Cast at intervals all the way up this piece. There

must be others there, though we can't see them. No matter if the fly falls with a splash; it's an advantage, indeed. The splash tells lurkers under bush or bank that provender is toward, and out they come. I thought so. There's one after the fly now; I saw the gleam of him as he turned pretty deep in the water. Pull the fly along quite steadily till you see the line checked. Now strike. You've got him. Hold him hard or he'll be under the bush. The stream is a narrow place, and the first rush must be checked if possible. That's right, and he's no great size after all. You didn't know they could pull like that, did you? Here he is in the net, a bare ½-pounder, but he gave some thrills. I don't think the belauded trout could have done much better, weight for weight. We won't keep him. Though fish do not run very big hereabouts, we shall do better than this.

Here's a hopeless stretch, bushes meeting right across it. I've no doubt there are plenty of fish under that network of twigs, but we can't get at them. Let's go on to the top of the bushes. Peep over the end one when you get to it. See something? Well, twitch your fly over—you can't cast it. Got him again. No, he's got you. Once a chub gets down under all that, you may as well give him up. Try hand-lining. No, it's no use. The fly's gone. Put on another, and we'll skip this shallow bit and get along to the pool above where the dead tree leans across.

Crawl up to the bottom of the pool and prospect cautiously. Now you get the real thing. Four, five of them in a group. And there are others in the shade beyond the tree; I can see a rise. Don't go any nearer. You must be ready to throw a long line in this sort of fishing. Chub are quicker than trout to observe strangers, and you'd be certain to frighten them if you moved. Drop your fly near that big one. They're all after it, but one of the others has it. Let him turn, and then strike. Play him kneeling if you can, so as not to cause more alarm than you can help. It ought to be possible to get a brace out of this pool.

Don't be too rough with him—he's bigger than the last—but handle him firmly all the same. He's coming down now, and, look! all the others are coming after him. It is curious how fish will often follow one which is hooked. I've seen both trout and salmon do it before now. Chub often do it. I am not sure whether it is curiosity, fellow-feeling, or the instinct which one sees in many wild creatures to be down on a person who "ain't got no friends." I rather suspect the last motive to be the explanation.

Pull him over the net. Out he comes. Quite a good chub for this district—1½ pounds—and we'll keep him. Tap him on the head, and put him in your basket with some of those sedges to keep him cool and fresh.

It's worth while resting this pool a bit, to let the fish recover from the late commotions. With luck

we'll get another. Usually you cannot get more than one or two fish out of a shoal in a small stream like this, but sometimes chub behave in an unexpected manner. I remember getting eleven out of a shoal once, and as each was hooked the others followed it. Some of them must have seen the net and me, but they went on rising none the less.

Yes, I should try again now. Creep along a bit, and cast into the shady part. I expect they've moved up there, as we can't see them below the tree. That's a good rise, like a trout's. He took it as it fell. No difficulty about striking that time. The hand acted automatically, and you got him on the half-volley, so to speak. Just the same size as the other, and they make a nice brace.

Now we're coming to a good place. We can shelter behind this overhanging clay bank and—look out! Run. . . . There's one round your hat! He's gone now. Confound these wasps! Why do they always place their beastly nests at the best fishing spots? One year the brutes settled plumb in the middle of my favourite roach-swim. I started to clear the ground with the end of my landing-net handle, and, as is my custom, attacked the nettles vigorously. Then the wasps attacked me. It was very painful, and I've never fished the swim since.

The next good pool is by that ash-tree. Let us cut straight across to it. We can prospect behind the

trunk. I don't see anything—yes I do, by Jove! Look at him sailing down the middle! That's a whacker! Three pounds if he's an ounce. He won't have it, bother him! Looked at it and turned away. We can't leave such a fish as that without a further effort. He's a monster as we reckon chub here. I know what he wants—a little frog. Come out into the meadow and hunt. Along this ditch is a likely place.

Fig. 29.—Baiting with a Dead Frog.

It's amazing how difficult it is to find a thing when you want it. When you don't want it, you can't get out of its way. If we weren't in need of them, frogs would be simply jostling us all over this meadow. But there must be some somewhere, and we shall come across a colony sooner or later. I see one; there's another. That's all right. We'll catch half a dozen, put them in this small tin, and get back to the stream. Not the very tiny ones; those fellows about an inch across the body.

Put on this round-bend hook—No. 3 I think it is. Kill your frog by flipping him on the head with your finger-nail, and then insert the hook at the mouth and bring it out at the tail. Sometimes, if you are going to do a lot of hard casting, it pays to put the hook in at the tail and bring it out at the mouth. Then you put a small split-shot on the gut, $\frac{1}{3}$ inch above the hook,

and tie the hind-legs of the frog just above it with fine silk. But for short, easy casting I like this way better. As you pull the frog through the water in short jerks, the legs kick as if it were swimming. You could, if you wished to, prevent it from slipping down the hook by putting a split-shot rather nearer the shank, and sewing up the mouth of the frog above it with a needle and silk. A long-shanked, eyed hook would produce the same effect by means of its eye, without a shot.

Now let us creep back to the ash-tree. The chub isn't in view now, but he'll appear in a minute, I expect. He's a roamer. Here he comes. Extend your line in the air, and drop the frog near him. Slowly with the rod. A frog is heavier with the fly, and doesn't travel so quickly through the air. You must allow plenty of time in the back cast. You can *feel* when the line is extended behind you by the weight at the end of it.

Good! that's the place. I thought so; the frog is the one thing in the world which that chub wanted. Look at the broad smile with which he approaches it, observe the hearty opening of his mouth, the resolute smack of his lips, and the satisfied manner in which he turns to depart. Now hit him and look out for squalls.

It was a brave fight, wasn't it? and the vanquished makes a brave show on the grass. There won't be many bigger chub caught hereabouts this summer. The needle of the spring-balance is down to 3 pounds

11 ounces. Have him set up? I don't know why you shouldn't. The value of a trophy depends entirely on the circumstances of its capture, and this fish is remarkable for a river where a chub of 2 pounds is considered a big one. In the Ouse, Thames, or Kennet, it would be nothing out of the ordinary, and in lower parts of the Hampshire Avon it would scarcely be worth keeping. But here its value is as great as would be the value of a $6\frac{1}{2}$-pounder in that more favoured stream.

One more fish with the frog, and then we'll be getting back to luncheon after a delightful morning. This summer chub-fishing with the fly-rod is one of the most exciting and attractive forms of sport the angler can have. The fascination of stalking a big fish and watching the whole process as he takes your fly or frog is almost unmatched in the thrills of fishing. You get it sometimes in dry-fly fishing for chalk-stream trout, but in no other kind of fishing that I know, and the fact that the chub gives it you in such full measure is enough to fix him for ever in your affection and esteem. Men who have never fished for chub with the fly-rod in hot summer weather in placid, slow-moving streams, have missed a great part of the pleasure of angling.

Fly-fishing for chub, as a general thing, is an affair of big flies fished wet, after the manner of this morning, and the best flies are, I think, Alder, Zulu, Coachman, Red and Black and Soldier Palmers, and a fly which looks rather like a Bluebottle, and is usually so called.

You can have your flies from ½ inch to 1½ inches in length, and a little tail of white kid is a great improvement to them.

But it may happen that chub are rising at natural flies on the surface, and then small flies, fished dry, are likely to serve you better. Those which you have acquired for dace-fishing are good enough for chub anywhere, and if you employ the same fine gut which you would use for dace, you will have some exciting battles. A big chub, hooked on a tiny fly and attached to a very light cast, will make a prolonged resistance, and, indeed, is quite likely to break you in the end. Opportunities of using the small dry fly effectively for chub do not occur very often, but when they do it is well to take advantage of them. A balmy, warm day, after heavy rain, is the occasion to be seized, for on such a day the fish are likely to be really rising. At other times, though they may be at the surface, they only rise in a desultory fashion, and it needs the splash of a big fly to stir their enthusiasm.

Winter

A question that must present itself to an angler who has a free day somewhere about Christmas-time is: "What am I to fish for?" There is, of course, plenty of choice, though not so much as in summer; but if the angler wants to combine interest with a certain amount

of exercise, I should advise him to pursue either pike or chub. Roach give good sport in winter sometimes, but fishing for them is a chilly game. Perch are decidedly uncertain in the cold weather. Dace are small game for a vigorous winter mood. The rest of the carp family are hardly worth bothering about, unless the weather has been unusually warm for some time. And it is possible that the requisite baits for pike are not to be had at a moment's notice, while artificial spinners do not seem adequate by themselves.

There remains the chub, which, valiant fish that he is, is always ready to show some sport, summer and winter alike; indeed, no fish that swims in our waters is so uniformly willing to feed all the year round if you approach him properly. Nor is he nearly so hard-pressed by anglers as some of his fellows—partly because he is not accounted very good meat, partly because fishing for him is not a sedentary matter. Most bottom fishers prefer the roach, because its capture does not involve much moving about.

The need for movement, however, is one of the chief charms of chub-fishing in winter. You keep reasonably warm, you have a constant change of scene, and even if sport is slack you need not be bored and frozen too, as so often happens by a roach-swim.

The equipment you want is your 13-foot bottom-fishing rod with its 3½-inch or 4-inch Nottingham reel; a fine running line which has been well greased so that

it will float; a good big float (a short swan-quill is as good as anything); some sound undrawn gut, and hooks. For bait, a lump of cheese-paste and a bag of lobworms are all that you need. Your landing-net in its sling, creel or bag on your back, a few sandwiches or a crust of bread and some cheese for lunch, you can go forth in light marching order, not without hope that the return will be more heavily burdened.

In winter chub have haunts which are well defined in most rivers. Where the water flows somewhat deep and not too fast under a clay bank or along a line of withy-bushes, by the camp-sheathing at the side of a weir-pool or mill-race, under willow roots and hollow banks—in such places must you seek winter chub. Wherever the bottom is of gravel or clay and the stream is not too fast or too shallow, there is a chance of them; but they are somewhat arbitrary in their likings, and it does not follow because a stretch looks like holding chub that the fish are inevitably there.

Knowledge of the river counts for much to the angler, both in locating the fish and also in estimating the depth of the water—a thing which is rather important, because it is not possible to use a plummet everywhere, and a man must take a good deal on trust.

On the whole, the lobworm is the best winter bait, and there is no better tackle for it than the two-hook tackle made with eyed hooks, described and figured on an earlier page. For a big lobworm the hooks may be

3 inches apart, one being inserted near the head of the worm, the other not far from the tail. If you use the cheese-paste, do not make it too stiff. Add about two parts of soft cheese to about three parts of ordinary bread-paste, and knead them together until they have thoroughly blended. Cheese by itself becomes too hard in the water, and is apt to prevent the hook from doing its duty when you strike, but the bread-and-cheese mixture remains reasonably soft. Use a big hook, say a No. 2 or 3 round-bend, and mould the paste on to it so that all is covered, but also so that the point of the hook is ready to emerge when wanted. If the point is too much covered a strike may not take effect. A piece of paste as big as your thumb-nail is not too big for chub.

The float should stand $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches out of the water when the hook is baited, and do not forget in putting split-shot or bullets on to the cast that a lump of cheese-paste has a definite weight of its own. If the shot are too heavy, the paste will pull the float too far down, and may even sink it altogether.

The reason why so much of the float must show above the water is that you may want to see it a long way off. It is not always necessary, but it is sometimes convenient, to fish in what is called the Trent fashion—that is to say, to let the float travel away from you downstream for some 20 or even 30 yards, winding it back when it has covered the distance, and then repeat-

ing the swim. In this way you can cover a lot of water without much trouble, and you can also fish places that could not otherwise be approached.

This is also the reason why the line must be greased. You must strike smartly when the float goes under 20 yards away, and this cannot be done if the line is water-logged—at any rate, it can only be done with a violence which may break the gut.

Chub are impatient of footsteps on the bank, even when they are in pretty deep water; so you are more likely to get bites by fishing in the Trent style than by fishing under the point of the rod. Therefore, though a swim can be quite easily managed in the second way, it is generally better to remain above it and let the bait travel down to it. And, of course, there are plenty of swims outside bushes or under trees which you could not possibly get at without the Trent style. It is an extremely useful mode of fishing, and it can be brought into service for other fish, such as dace and roach, or barbel in the summer.

If you are fishing for chub in this way in the summer, the bait can swim at midwater, or sometimes at less than midwater; but in winter it should be pretty near the bottom, say 6 inches off it. The most important point in management of the float is to see that it travels smoothly with the current, and is not checked in any way till it reaches the end of the swim. A big float, which carries eight or ten shot or a couple of

small bullets, may be heavy enough to draw line off the reel, when the check is off, without being hindered in its course; but as a rule it will want some assistance. Keep pulling off line from the reel as it is needed, and the float will draw it through the rings easily enough.

The bite of a chub as shown by the float is usually very decided, and the float more often than not goes under at once. Occasionally it seems to pause for a moment before it goes under. When it disappears you have to strike sharply—the more sharply the further the float is away. It follows, therefore, that very fine tackle is not suitable for this kind of fishing, because you cannot regulate the force of the strike with due nicety at a considerable distance. Very fine tackle is not, indeed, necessary for chub-fishing. Drawn gut is practically never needed, and in winter "refina" of moderate thickness is quite fine enough.

At the end of a long swim it is worth while keeping the float still for a little time. This causes the bait to rise somewhat in the water, and the upward motion is occasionally attractive to a fish. The result may be a sudden sharp bite, and often, if you are holding the line tight, the chub which takes thus will hook himself by his own impetuosity.

I know few more pleasurable ways of spending crisp winter hours than chub-fishing in this manner. Wandering on from bend to bend, trying down a clay bank here, along a line of withies there, one never stops long

in the same place, and can keep reasonably warm. Having cast in a few fragments of paste, or two or three small worms, in any swim, one lets the float travel along it twice or thrice, and should there be no result one goes on undismayed to the next likely spot. No single swim may yield many fish, but the aggregate for a day may be considerable if the chub are at all in the humour. Fishing the choicer bits, you can in a day cover two or three miles of river, and it will be odd if you cannot show at least a brace or two of decent fish at the end of it.

Lastly, it may be said that you cannot easily find a better fighter than a winter chub of 2 pounds or more hooked at the end of a long line downstream. If, as often happens, he has handy a place of refuge in the shape of tree-roots or snags, it will take you all your time and skill to bring him to the net. The chub is a much gamer antagonist than most fishing writers will allow, and in winter he is at his best.

CHAPTER X

THE GOLDEN FISH

"A golden fish lo you—a fish all plated thick with gold."

WHENEVER I think of the rudd, I think also of the fisher Asphalion and his dream-capture, Englished for us out of Theocritus' Greek by that good angler, Mr. Andrew Lang. For the rudd is, emphatically, a golden fish, the only real golden fish we have of our own in British fresh waters, and its gold, tricked out with the ruddy glowing fins and eyes, is the "good red gold" of the old ballads. The rudd seems to me a peculiarly English fish, whereas golden carp, tench, and orfe (all, perhaps, more impressively golden in their scales) are aliens, and of no sporting account.

Unluckily, the rudd is not of much sporting account either, but that is because it is so sparsely distributed. Were it as common as the chub it would be one of the most popular and sought-after of fishes, for it bites heartily and fights with power.

Few of our rivers outside Norfolk have any store of

rudd, the Great Ouse being the chief exception, and comparatively few lakes know this handsome and desirable fish. But where it does flourish, it flourishes abundantly, and it might with advantage be introduced to many a water. In England, of course, the Broad district is the stronghold of rudd, though there are a few well-known lakes elsewhere, such as Slapton Ley in Devonshire and Ravensthorpe Reservoir near Northampton, which have an established reputation for the number and size of their golden fish. In Ireland rudd are common, taking much the place that the roach does in England.

In fishing books you usually find roach and rudd bracketed and considered together, because they have many outward points of similarity, and are sometimes mistaken the one for the other. It is not, however, difficult to distinguish them. In the first place, the rudd, at any rate when freshly caught, is golden, while the roach is silver. Its shape also is not quite the same, for it is deeper in proportion to its length. And the position of the back fin is a good guide. In the roach this fin is almost immediately above the ventral fins, but in the rudd it lies some way behind them.

Were I seeking likeness of habits and character I should compare the rudd, not to the roach, but to the chub. There is something sturdy about the rudd which I do not find in the roach, but which is

conspicuous in chub, and, moreover, the general behaviour of the first and last has points of similarity. In hot weather you *may* find roach near the surface. Both the others are sure to be there. And, with the difference that rudd are not notorious cannibals like chub, you fish for both in ways that have a decided family likeness.

Fly-fishing is the most attractive method of catching rudd, of course, and in essentials it is exactly like fly-fishing for chub, except that you usually have to do it from a boat instead of from the bank. On the Broads I have had very thrilling times with rudd, paddling the boat gently into the little creeks and pools that you find here and there among the rush-forests, and stalking the red-brown forms that I could see basking in the sunshine. A Rob Roy canoe would be the ideal craft for stalking rudd with a fly-rod, since you can paddle it with so little disturbance of the water ; but you have to be a good waterman to attempt fly-fishing from a canoe.

Rudd will take a fly either dry or sunk, and in either case the rules laid down earlier as to fly-fishing for coarse fish generally hold good. Do not hurry the strike in either method. With the wet fly especially, practise self-control in this matter. Draw the fly steadily and slowly along until you see the line tighten, and do not be deluded into the notion that a following wave signifies a rise. It may be prophetic of a rise,

but for the moment it only means that a rudd is in pursuit of the fly.

I do not think that rudd are particular as to patterns, any more than other coarse fish. Such wet flies as you would use for chub—Alders, Palmers, Coachman, Blue-bottle, and so on—will serve admirably for rudd also. They should be somewhat smaller, say on No. 3 or No. 4 hooks, but they are all improved by the small kid tail recommended for chub. I do not know what fish take this white fragment for, but it seems to give them an impression of something more than usually attractive. They can hardly regard it as a gentle, as is suggested by some writers, because they do not know what a gentle is. How should they? Some water-flies carry a bunch of eggs about with them, and the kid tail may suggest something like that. Or its merits may lie in its actual texture, and it may seem like genuine food to the palate of the fish. At any rate, they are less inclined to eject a fly from their mouths when it has a kid tail than when it has not.

For dry-fly fishing a Wickham is very good at times, and other patterns to be commended are Coachman, Black Gnat, Soldier Palmer, and Red Tag.

As a rule, one does not require very fine gut for rudd-fishing; the finest undrawn gut will serve, and if you cannot get the *finest*, which is rather hard to come by, 2X drawn gut will do very well. The Hercules casts labelled thus are excellent for work of this kind.

Personally I cut them up into shorter lengths, and add about 1 to 2 yards of heavier tapered gut. I believe that the Hercules casts are prepared in some special way by Messrs. Allcock and Co., the wholesale makers; at any rate, they are very strong, and do not seem to fray so much as most drawn gut.

Float-fishing for rudd is not quite like any other kind of float-fishing, because the fish lie so near the surface. Of course, at times, when the weather is cold, they swim deeper, and are to be caught in the same way as roach, with a bait near the bottom, but typical rudd-fishing is a superficial matter.

The Norfolk plan is to moor the boat some 20 to 25 yards away from the rushes on the side of a Broad towards which the wind is blowing. Then fragments of dry bread are cast out, the wind carries them into the rushes, and sooner or later there will be seen plunging and turmoil as the rudd begin to feed on them. Then the angler casts his float as close to the rushes as he can get it. The hook (about No. 8) is not more than 18 inches below the float, and it is baited with a good big piece of bread-paste. To simplify the tackle it is a good plan to use what is called a "self-cocking" float—that is to say, a float which cocks of its own accord without the need of any shot on the gut. Any float can be made self-cocking by wrapping lead wire round the lower end of it, and

any good tackle-maker can supply lead wire, which is used a good deal in salmon-fishing.

There is no hesitation about a rudd-bite ; the float goes bodily under, or is carried off sideways at a good round pace, and, with a firm strike, the angler ought seldom to miss a fish. But it is of decided advantage to have the line greased and floating, so that the strike may have quicker and more certain effect. The float is a long way from the rod, and with a sunk line you have to "feel for" the fish before you strike. That involves an appreciable waste of time, and may lose the fish.

Rudd are contradictory creatures, at once bold and timid. They do not seem to resent the fall and splash of a heavy float among them, or even on top of their heads, and often a bite follows immediately on the settling of the bait. On the other hand, they are intensely suspicious of an approaching boat, and you can seldom get much nearer to a shoal than 20 yards without frightening them away. Perhaps the fact that the Norfolk Broads are mostly very shallow may have something to do with that, and in deep lakes a closer approach might be quite feasible. I have never fished for rudd in a deep lake, so I do not know, but I have found a similar difference to hold good with bream. The vibrations set up by sculls or paddle must, of course, be much more widespread in shallow water than in deep.

I remember one queer before-breakfast adventure with rudd which rather supports this theory. I had been trying to catch fish with a fly on one of the shallow Broads at the head of the River Thurne, and, having had no success, paddled slowly down the river with no particular object in view. Presently I came to a very weedy portion, and eased up at the edge of a clear hole about 6 feet deep. As I sat looking into the water, I became aware of some large rudd cruising about in and out of the weeds quite close to me. Without moving from my seat, I picked up my fly-rod, put on a roach-hook instead of the fly, dipped a piece of bread in the water and made some paste, and began to fish for them, throwing in a few pellets as ground-bait.

The result was a fascinating hour of sport. With an interval of ten minutes or so between each capture, to enable the rudd to regain confidence, I had in all five splendid battles, and the best five rudd I ever got in Norfolk at one time, from 1½ to 2 pounds. On the fly-rod they fought splendidly, and I shall never forget the gleam of the morning sun on their golden scales as they turned in the water and, later, lay on the floor of the boat. The remarkable thing about the affair was that I was so close to the fish the whole time, with only a narrow strip of weed between the side of the boat and their abode. But they were not on the surface, and the water was deep—as deep water goes in

that part of the world. Also, my approach had, accidentally, been perfectly quiet.

Occasionally I have caught good rudd on worms, and more often I have found a bunch of six or seven gentles a good bait. On Slapton Ley I believe a bunch of gentles cast like a fly is the most successful lure, but I can only speak of the Ley from hearsay. Personally, my experience of casting bunches of gentles has not been happy. Having laboriously constructed a bunch of, say, ten, I make a cast. At the second cast the bunch looks less convincing, at the third it seems to have dwindled, and after the fourth, examination of the hook shows that only two gentles are left. If one *must* cast bunches of gentles, either for rudd or chub, it is just as well to do so in a place where only a short line is required, and where one can *swing* the line backwards and forwards without any display of force.

For rudd-fishing, as a general rule, I do not think one wants better lures than the fly and ordinary bread-paste.

CHAPTER XI

SHREDS AND PATCHES

I AM in the mood for an odd day—a day which to the angler of orderly habit may seem a thing of shreds and patches, but which to me is a fascinating blend of varied delights. Here in this headquarters of the brotherhood we are very fortunately placed, for everybody can find a sort of fishing to suit his taste. Three-quarters of us will assuredly set out for the lesser stream which is sacred to trout, there to practise dry-fly arts of the loftiest description. You are to know that some of us will not know complete happiness till we have found out how to attain complete dryness in our fishing—that is to say, to cause our fly to hover above the water like a dancing spinner or a fluttering sedge. Others of us appreciate and admire this excellent aspiration, but have a secret preference for catching something, and so we are putting together long roach-rods, short barbel-rods, perch-rods of middle stature—all kinds of rods. Even a stumpy pike-rod

may be observed amid the forest which temporarily clothes the little lawn.

This is in truth the angler's Liberty Hall. We may all do precisely what we please, so we err not against the *bonos mores* of sport, and no one of us interferes with his brother, save in the way of that friendly chaff which adds a spice and a savour to our pastime. Moreover, we have plenty of water in which to indulge our varied tastes. The Astronomer, cleverest of roach-fishers, will presently be seen meditating on high matters beside his favourite fence swim in the big river. The Eagle-eyed One, who can see fish through 8 feet of water as easily as you or I could see them in 24 inches, will be observed making his cautious way along the bank, peering over the rushes and using his eyes much more than his rod. Anon he will be seen to stop, shade his eyes with his hand, and then withdraw quietly from the riverside. A little later he will be sitting and watching the tip of his rod, which just projects over the herbage of the bank. This means that he has found a large pike, invisible to all others, and that he has placed a gudgeon on a paternoster within a foot or two of its nose. Sooner or later there will be a fierce jag at the rod-top, the easy-running reel will give forth the necessary line, and the Eagle-eyed One will duly strike and play his 10-pounder, the third of that size that he has had this season.

The barbel-rod will be carried to what is respectfully

known as The Pool. It is the one superlative pool in a river of many pools, and only a few of us have the freedom of it. Between you and me, however, I do not envy the barbel-rod's privilege. The last barbel was caught there about ten years ago, and I would wager a reasonable sum that the next will not be taken to-day. Our barbel here are a mystery. They are very large—that fish of ten years ago was about 13 pounds—but they have a supreme contempt for the angler and his lures. Hardly one is caught in any part of the water in a season, and the produce of The Pool, which has the reputation of holding the most and the biggest, is as I have said. The Astronomer occasionally returns with an account of having hooked what he calls a "steam-engine" on his roach-tackle, but, of course, in this river of many weeds steam-engines are not to be landed on such gear.

With mutual shouts of "Tight lines," the party separates, each man going his own way. I go mine to the despised water above the mill, where the river and canal are one, where barges sometimes make their slow passage, though not often, and where more persons than the contemplative man could wish pass and repass along the towing-path. It is ten minutes' walk to the White Bridge, where fishing begins, and while we dodge the motor vehicles which make this old road to London lively, I will tell you what I have in my creel. As you have observed, the rod in my hand is an 11-foot

fly-rod, and you will be wondering what I propose to do with it, since I am not of the company of high and dry ones.

Well, in the first place, the creel holds a box of flies, which is but fitting, considering the nature of the rod. Next there is a linen bag full of moss and worms. The worms are of that kind called "marsh worms," and they are midway in size between brandlings and lobworms. For most fishing purposes there is no better kind. Then there is a little tin tobacco-box, which holds three or four small artificial minnows. A large piece of crumby bread is there too, a small wallet which holds gut and hooks, and, lastly, a packet of frugal lunch. In my pocket are also a tobacco-pouch with some gut a-soak, a spring-balance, and a small leather box full of split shot and bullets.

I am, with all this, equipped for many kinds of fishing, and with any luck I ought to get some varied sport. The water is of very varied nature, and I mean to visit a good deal of it, trying the bait that seems most useful in each place.

First there is this White Bridge stretch, whose nature you can now observe. It is only a short piece, about 200 yards in length, and below it down to the mill, a distance of about a quarter of a mile, the fishing is preserved by other folk. Short though it be, our stretch is noteworthy for its shoal of chub. They lie all along the withy-bushes which line the left bank of

the river, and which in many places dip down into the water, giving just such strongholds and feeding-places as chub delight in.

The queer thing about it is that all the chub are in this particular stretch; at any rate, in all the hundreds of times that I have walked along the towing-path down to the mill, I have never seen a sign of a chub anywhere else. Nor are these fish apt at concealing their presence in water like this—clear, seldom ruffled by wind, thanks to the trees on either bank, and nicely warmed by summer suns. If there were chub below in any quantity, you would be certain to see them basking on the surface. You never do see them; therefore they cannot be there. But there are some roach-swims of noble character on which I often cast an envious eye. They are deep and slow-flowing, which is rather a rarity in this river. In most places the stream is too fast for comfortable roach-fishing, and it is only where it gets dammed up for mill purposes that you get the slow, even pace fitted to the needs of a light roach-float.

There is another odd thing about our little bit of White Bridge water, and that is that only in one particular hole does there seem to be a chance of a good perch. Forty yards below the bridge, you see on the left a bay, or rather a wide shallow ditch of some length. On the right, nearly opposite to it, is a little bridge, which carries the towing-path over a culvert,

used sometimes for watering the adjacent meadow. It is almost in the line between these two landmarks that you will catch a good perch, if anywhere. The ditch, by the way, used to be a more considerable thing than it is now, and it ran almost from the river to the road, being quite 100 yards long and much deeper.

In those days it was reported to be the home of a monster pike, the sort of fish that takes its place in the annals of a country neighbourhood beside the headless horseman, the grey lady, the phantom coach, and other objects of wonder and awe. Tradition tells how a brave labourer essayed to catch this pike with a hay-rake one early morning, and adds briefly that he escaped with his life, but without his rake. I know not how that may be, but I know that the ditch is now too shallow to hold a big pike, and that if the fish still exists it must be in the main river. Some day, perhaps, an honest angler, in whom I see some resemblance to myself, should have a chance of ascertaining, with the aid of a weighing-machine of the kind coal-merchants use, how big that pike really is. It will be an expensive matter to have it set up in a glass case, but no matter. Hang the expense in so worthy a cause!

I am going to try first for one of those good perch which lie thus mysteriously in this one particular spot. A 3-yard cast tapering to 1X gut, and ending in two eyed hooks fastened in the way described before, is ready in the pouch. It is uncoiled and attached to the

reel-line, which is no other than my fly-line. It has a good long taper, and is fine for its last 4 or 5 yards; otherwise it would scarcely do for this fishing. A single split-shot is nipped on to the gut 18 inches above the hooks (nipped on with my teeth, a reprehensible practice, but one which will be mine so long as my teeth serve for the purpose; little shot-tweezers belong to the class of things that I lose); above the shot is a small bullet, both drilled and split. These bullets are the comfort of my life, because they can easily be put on and taken off. You can squeeze them tight with finger and thumb, and you can open them again with a knife-blade, or, better, with the small screwdriver which is part of every well-appointed fishing-knife.

The worm is on the hooks, and now I will begin. It has to be swung out nearly to the middle of the river, say 10 yards away, slightly upstream of where I am standing, and with the well-dressed pliant fly-line this is an easy matter. A couple of yards drawn off the reel and held in a loop in the left hand are released when the bait has got its proper momentum. Once in the water, the worm sinks to the bottom, and then slowly trundles along in 7 feet of water. With the rod I help its progress, feeling for any check or obstruction. There are weeds here and there, so a stoppage occurs every now and then, and it is necessary to raise the rod a little to clear the lead or hooks from their embrace.

This has to be done gently and slowly, partly because violence tends to fasten the hook in the weeds, partly because at the moment of raising the rod there is quite a likelihood of a bite. In this sort of fishing the hand can hardly be too sensitive, and it should proceed with all the delicacy of Agag's foot. Sometimes a bite comes as a bold snatch followed by a determined pull, but perhaps more often it is recognizable as no more than a thrill along the line and rod, a fish having taken the worm quietly and remained quite still. In any case, at suspicion of a fish hold your hand and be ready to yield to a possible bite, which will soon be declared by an outward or upward movement of the line. When that is manifest you can strike gently; it will be strange if one of the two hooks is not in the fish's mouth. With a single hook you should wait rather longer, and let the fish run a yard or more before striking.

A fly-rod has the advantage for this sort of fishing of being very sensitive, and the slightest touch can be felt if you are on the alert. I feel something now. Yes; there goes the line, gradually increasing its pace as the fish swims off, possibly to prevent another perch from sharing in the dainty it has found. Fish are very like chickens in their desire to rob their fellows of treasure-trove. Possession to them has no bearing on points of the law. Now the rod-point goes up and the perch is hooked. The fight which follows shows another merit

in the fly-rod. You get a splendid contest on the lissom split-cane, and a 1-pound perch will fight as hard as a trout, and much more disconcertingly. The short, sharp rushes, quick turns, and downward stabs, are all calculated to loose the hook from its hold, and they very often do so. A perch hooked is by no means a perch landed, unless it has swallowed the bait, which no true sportsman could desire. Hook a fish in the mouth and the contest is a fair trial of skill between the opposed parties, but a fish hooked in the stomach has no chance unless it breaks the gut. I hate hooking perch far down, and that is one reason why I nearly always use this two-hook tackle in fishing for them with worm. It enables me to strike much sooner, and so to avoid the swallowing of the bait.

It has been a long battle, but the fish is now beaten and in the net. See where the hooks are: the upper one in the corner of the mouth, the lower hanging loose. See also how insecure the hold is, the hook having worn quite a hole in the rather brittle cartilage. Another minute and the perch would have been free. If it had ever got the line slack, it would likewise have escaped. The moral is, keep the line taut and waste no time. As things are happily ordered the fish is mine, a handsome pounder in perfect condition, and warranted to make a dainty dish on the morrow. Three smart taps on the head with the end of the spring-balance (I should carry a little weighted stick

like a life-preserver, which is called a "priest," for killing fish, but that is another of the things that get lost; the spring-balance serves both to weigh and kill), and the fish is ready for the creel. A few sedges make a bed for him and a large dock-leaf a covering.

Another worm and here goes for another perch. There he is, too. Alas! I have lost him. Such is angling experience since the day when Walton's pupil first uttered a like woeful plaint. Nor shall I get another bite here this morning, I fear. Large perch have a knack of communicating suspicion to one another in this river, and if you lose one, you are not likely to catch any more in the same place. Perhaps it is different when they are really hungry. I have never had the luck to find them in that condition, or to catch more than four or five in a day's fishing on this water. They are not very plentiful for one thing, and for another they are uncommonly well fed by Nature.

Ten minutes more without a bite. It is as I expected, and I'll waste no more time over it. Instead, I'll put on a fly and try to catch a chub. The fly-cast is taken from the pouch and the worm-trace is put back into it in a moment. This simple gear is easily and quickly changed. From the fly-box I select that old favourite, a Zulu—a black hackle fly with a gleam of silver twist in the body and a tail made of red wool. It is an excellent fly for chub here, or anywhere for that matter, and a pretty big one is best, say ¾ inch

long. Chub have large mouths, and like to have them filled.

The withy-bushes begin on the opposite side just below the ditch, and there are 100 yards of water to be fished. The fly has to be thrown across the river so that it falls in at the edge of the bushes; it is allowed to sink a little and then drawn slowly away. To reach the other side comfortably I employ the device known as "shooting" line. Its principle is exactly the same as that used in casting out a bait. Two yards of line are held in the hand, and released when the weight of the rest of the line is so placed in the forward cast that it is able to draw them out. It is possible to shoot 6 or 7 yards of line at a pinch in very long casting, and the method is most valuable for all kinds of fishing. You see it most employed, however, in tournament-casting, and the long casts that make us more humble persons tremble are made chiefly by grace of long shooting.

The morning breeze has freshened a little since we got here, and the result is a slight ripple on the water, which is a pity. In chub-fishing I like to be able to see the fish and to drop the fly close to them, and a ripple rather hinders that. As a matter of fact, I cannot see a sign of a fish on the other side, though the August sun is doing its best to help me. I must "chuck and chance it," as the elegant fly-fishing idiom hath it.

There! do you see a sort of wave coming out from

under the withies, such a wave as might be caused by a small torpedo? That is a chub. He was lying right under the bush, and seeing or feeling the fall of the fly, he was out and after it in a flash. This is the moment which is apt to prove rather trying to the nerves of a novice. He knows that his fly is somewhere over there. Somewhere over there also is a fish, probably of huge dimensions to judge from the wave, and fly and fish are in close proximity. But how close? And ought the novice to strike? No, the novice ought not to strike. Your chub is a determined fellow, but not to be hurried. In his own good time—— There, do you see the line straightening? As you see that, I feel the thrill which means that the fly is in the fish's mouth, and when I feel that I strike.

It is a little like salmon-fishing, this fight with a big chub at the end of a long line in strong, deep water. The fish is powerful, goes off with a fine dash at first, and then settles down to a dignified resistance in the deep water. With this fine gut I cannot hurry him, but must let him have his head for a bit. With stout gut—and in places you both can and should use it for chub—I could have the fish out in half the time. But where the river is reasonably free from obstructions, you need not use very strong tackle. The finest undrawn gut is ample for chub here. Some rivers abound in water-lily leaves and old stumps, and things of that kind. In them lake-trout gut is the safer gear, because

when a fish is hooked you may have to pull him away from dangerous places by main force.

I am beginning to recover line, which shows that the fish is thinking of surrender, and there is the gleam of his broad side as he turns in the water. In you come! Ah, would you? And he's done it, confound him!—dived straight into the thick patch of weeds close to my bank, where he remains immovable. This seems a bad business, but it is not so bad as it looks. The thing to do is to get somewhat downstream, lengthen line so that it can be grasped, and then pull gently direct on the fish with the hand. This is called "hand-lining," and why it should have such an effect on fish I have no idea. But it does stir them wonderfully. Often you might keep a strain on a weeded fish for half an hour from the rod without the least effect, but pull on the line with the hand and he'll come out in half a minute.

Even so is it now. The fish kicks a little and begins to come out. Immediately I throw the rod back so as to put the strain on to it again, and the rest is merely an affair of winding in and using the landing-net. The weight in the net as I lift it out of the water testifies to the importance of the capture. The spring-balance first slays the chub, and then shows it to be 1 ounce over 3 pounds—not by any means a monster, but a good big one as chub go. The chub has a bad name in some quarters, but it is difficult to think ill of such a

shapely creature as now lies on the grass, gleaming with silver scales which shade to dusky copper on the back, and which are thrown into relief by the red fins and dark tail. The chub's head is perhaps a thought big for elegance, but it is very efficient, a quality which ought to have some appeal in these days of hustle. Put a chub's head on a man, and we others would wag our gudgeon or dace-like physiognomies and say admiringly: "That's a fellow who knows his own mind and will go far." Far away out of sight the chub has some noble teeth of his own, too. They are set in his throat, and you would never suspect their existence. Were they in his mouth the chub might almost rival the tiger-fish of Africa, which tear their prey to pieces with ease and precision, their prey being usually several sizes larger than they are.

Three pounds added to the creel means heavy carrying this hot day. The fine end of the cast is much frayed by the weeds, as I knew it would be when the chub dived into them, and there is no gut of the right thickness soaked and ready to replace it. All things considered, I am for making a move and leaving the other chub for another day. One good one is enough to make the basket interesting. Also, I yearn for another perch or two.

On the way down to the mill there is some shade from the cluster of trees that lines the towing-path, and shade begins to be welcome. People sneer at fishing

for a lazy game, but any kind of fishing which involves walking about in hot weather is strenuous enough for most consciences. Besides, you are both physically and mentally alert the whole day, which is in itself tiring. By teatime I shall have covered several miles, and shall have knelt, crawled, craned, stooped, and done almost everything that is enjoined in the instructions for Swedish exercises. Besides, there will have been battles with wasps—battles which leave a man panting and dishevelled. There is a kind of wasp which comes at you "with intent," and of that kind you have somehow to be rid. The emergency requires that you shall cast down your impedimenta, snatch off your hat, and beat the air with it furiously for some minutes. At any rate, that is what I do. It generally sends the wasp away in the long-run. Then, picking up my traps, I proceed on my journey, and as I make the first onward step the wasp returns to the attack. There is plenty of exercise in this business.

We are now at the end of the shade and the beginning of the canal, for the water system divides, the river bearing away to the left by the mill and the canal to the right, through the lock. The fishing round about the mill belongs to those other folk, and it is in the mill-pool that the barbel-rod is at work. I think I can see his hat between those two apple-trees. Perhaps you can hardly judge moods from a hat, but it does not to me look very triumphant.

Just below the lock is a deep, dark hole, where a ritual has to be performed in sunny weather, and that is to creep to the edge on all fours and peer down over the camp-sheathing. This must be done, because I met a son of Izaak here one day, a worthy and, methought, truthful gentleman of middle age, who told me that he had at this spot caught a perch of $2\frac{3}{4}$ pounds a week before, and that he believed that the hole contained bigger ones. Of those bigger ones I confess I have never seen a trace, but one never knows ; perch are queer fish, which wander a good deal, and it is always worth while looking for them. Some day I promise myself the pleasure of looking down into the clear water, and, as my eyes get accustomed to the transparent gloom, of making out several dusky forms moving slowly about over the brown gravel at the bottom. Presently one of them will tilt his head upwards and see something halfway up the camp-sheathing which needs his attention ; he will deliberately approach, and presently I shall be able to see clearly the hog back, bristling fin, dark stripes, and olive-gold tricked out with red points, of the perch of my dreams. I shall, of course, have my line in my hand, and a tempting red worm will slowly descend to meet this apparition. A mouth will open and shut, the line will be dropped and the rod grasped, and with great dexterity I shall guide that great perch away from his companions, to land him many yards lower

down the canal. After that I shall return for another. *Sic itur ad astra!*

This dream is not going to come true to-day; but I believe there are some perch, though smaller ones, farther along, about midway between this pool and the swing-bridge. At any rate, they were there a week ago. There is also a big shoal of roach in this reach, and another shoal of fine dace. They all cruise up and down, are sometimes at one place, sometimes at another, and they are harder to catch than almost any fish I have met. The water is very clear and mostly rather shallow, so they can see the angler a long way off, and retreat before him as one hurried fish. The perch are less timid, but also harder to find. That shoal visible a week ago may not be visible again this summer; perhaps it will have migrated into a small stream which joins the canal lower down. Still, it is worth while trying for one, and I think a small Devon minnow is the thing to try with, as there is quite a ripple on the water now.

Spinning a minnow is often made a more serious business than it need be, and there is much talk among experts of traces and leads and special rods, multiplying reels, and so on. Of course, all these matters are of service if you are going to be an earnest spinner for a whole day, but if you only want to spin "whiles," in the course of a day's fishing such as this, do as I do: tie a loop in the end of your fly-cast (the

frayed part having been cut off) and attach it to the swivel of a little aluminium minnow, 1 inch long. You can fish this minnow like a fly if you want to—it does not weigh so very much more—or you can put a split-shot and one of the bullets on the cast, and spin as if you had a spinning-rod, lead, trace, and all the rest of it. All that is wanted is to make the bait spin across the place where the fish are. Native ingenuity will tell you how this may be most easily accomplished.

Personally, here I compromise between the two methods. The canal is not more than 17 yards across at this point, and only in the middle is there much depth, say 4 feet to 5 feet of water. If I cover this channel and keep the minnow spinning nearly up to my own bank, it is all that is wanted. I do not put any lead on the cast, and I throw the minnow out like a fly, but help the recovery by drawing the line in with the left hand as well as keeping the rod moving. This is necessary because the water is dead. In a stream the current would help the rod a great deal, and make the whole business easier. Having lifted the minnow out, I release a little line at the back cast and shoot the rest at the forward cast. It sounds complicated, but is not so, really. If your fly-rod and you understand each other, between you you can do almost anything in reason, including such an apparently difficult feat as shooting both ways during one cast. It would not, however, be

possible to do this effectually with a long line in dead water, or if there were bad obstructions behind your casting arm.

The perch *may* still be here, but they are certainly not enthusiastic. Twenty yards of water have been covered, and I have not seen so much as a fin following the bait. This looks bad, because where perch are you will hardly fail to get one or more to follow a small spinning-bait, though they may not take it. The best place in which to spin for perch is a weir-pool or mill-pool where the water is lively and foam-flecked. Often you will get a fish or two by spinning close to the walls which are common features of such pools. But you will seldom get more than one or two out of a shoal. I don't know why this is so, because perch will sometimes run at huge pike-spoons nearly as big as themselves, and, indeed, are attracted by anything that moves, even a lead plummet. Unless there is a good deal of likely water to be fished, it is hardly worth while spending a whole day in spinning for perch. If you have plenty of water and want to spin, use small Devon minnows, either silver or gold, and have a Wagtail or two in reserve. The Wagtail is a bait made of strips of india-rubber with a bright head, and it is one of the best artificial baits both for perch and pike.

One more cast, and then—got him! No, it's not a perch at all, only a little jack—a mere infant of a fish,

scarcely 7 inches long. A pretty little fellow this, but as formidable to fry now as it will be to grown fishes later on. The pike must be a grim bed-fellow to dace and such like, but I doubt if it takes such a toll of life as does a large eel, weight for weight. Pike, at any rate after reaching a certain size, are not always harrying the waters as their appearance would suggest. Indeed, anglers' experience goes to show that they feed much less frequently than most fish.

The pikelet is returned, and there is no sign of perch. I will go on to the swing-bridge and see what may be seen there. A road crosses the canal here, and carts go over the bridge pretty frequently, but the fish do not seem to mind them, though they make a great clatter on the wood and must cause considerable vibration in the water. It seems to be pretty well established that fish soon get accustomed to regular or periodical disturbances of this kind. But if one took a beetle and hammered on one of the piers of the bridge, I fancy there would be a *sauve qui peut* among the roach which are indifferent to carts.

There is generally a shoal of roach under or about the bridge, and you can see them if you look cautiously over the rail, swimming backwards and forwards in their restless fashion, and apparently pursued by some gadfly that lets them know no repose. Roach have been compared to sheep by greater pens than mine, and it is a good comparison. I see the resemblance more

in their manner of swimming about than in the easiness with which they can be caught. Watch that shoal making up-stream. One large old fish leads. A dozen follow him in an uneasy troop; then come three or four stragglers, then another troop, the main body this time, large and small in a bunch. All seem to be in an immense hurry to get somewhere. They are gone by, and behold three more, simply frantic at the idea of being left behind, and rushing for dear life after their fellows. In two minutes the shoal will return in the same manner.

Roach always seem to me to behave in this aimless way unless they are really on the feed. Having got to a certain spot without delay, they lose no possible time in coming back again. What they gain by it except exercise I do not know. It may be that they are aware of spectators, and are genuinely alarmed, but I have seen them doing it when they could not possibly have seen me. Are they troubled by fears of whose nature we know nothing—

> "Like one that on a lonesome road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And having once turned round, walks on,
> And turns no more his head,
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread"?

Some of these roach are very desirable—2-pounders, if a man may judge by that fallible instrument, the eye. It were a sin to pass them untried, and though

previous experience gives very little hope of success with them, I seldom omit to pay them the compliment of an offering. Drawing back from the bridge, I change my cast again, putting on the fine cast I used with the worm higher up. I replace the worm-hooks by a No. 10 roach-hook, tied on the finest gut (5X), and take off the split bullet, leaving only the single shot on the cast. Then I take a piece of the bread from my creel, wrap it loosely in the corner of my duster, and dip it into the water until it is sodden. Then I screw it up in the corner of the duster till it is a tight round ball, squeezing as much water out as I possibly can. After this I unscrew it, and find that the soaked bread is turned into pretty stiff paste, as good an all-round bait for roach as there is.

A piece as big as a small marble is squeezed on to the hook, and I am ready. Going quietly back to the corner of the bridge, I lay the rod along the top rail with only the extreme tip showing, and keep the bait dangling above the water. With the left hand meanwhile I throw a few little pieces of paste about the size of peas. As I do so, the roach swim down again, and the pellets sink right among them. You would say that they treated the offering with a contempt closely bordering on aversion. Look at that big fellow going right out of his way to avoid them. But now look at that middle-sized fish, which is of different mind. He stops, looks at a sinking pellet, follows it down, and

then seizes it ere it vanishes in the weeds that line the bottom. Then he hurries on under the bridge after his fellows.

If one fish will take a piece of paste, others will, and by persevering it ought to be possible to catch a roach or two. While the shoal is out of sight I drop my bait into the water, and keep it hanging in full view about 3 feet below the surface. They are coming back faster than ever, and it really looks as though my bait was speeding them on their course. I let it sink very slowly. One roach turns to it, but passes on. Then I draw it slowly up. That is better. That roach is after it, and he means business. See, he's got it, and is turning. As he turns I strike gently, and the trick is done. A ¾-pounder is not much to boast of, considering the size of some of the fish in that shoal, but it is a long way better than nothing. Besides, the same dodge ought to be good for a couple more, and is. But their capture seems to awake suspicion in already troubled minds, and I can hope for nothing more here.

Stay! what is that? Quite a nice perch has appeared from under the bridge, and is poised there like a sentry guarding a gate. How to catch him—I have it: one of those minnows that play about in the bay above. It is but the work of a minute or two to leave the bridge, drop the hook, with a tiny morsel of paste on its point, among the minnows, and watch till it disappears in a greedy mouth. A twitch of the rod-point and a fat

little minnow comes kicking into the air. The hook is fixed in the corner of its lip, and so needs no adjustment. It remains but to drop this tempting bait in where the perch is and await results.

On getting back to the bridge, I find that the perch is gone ; but no matter—he must be underneath. I let the slight stream carry the minnow away out of sight, and simply await results. Nor is there long delay. The line twitches and then begins to move to one side. I strike, and am engaged at once in battle. The gut is of the finest, and the fish has the advantage of position, but in my favour is the supple nature of the rod. It takes time, but at last I am able to use the landing-net once more, for a nice perch of just over 1 pound. This is very satisfactory, and with a brace of 1-pound perch, a big chub, and three good roach, I have laid the foundation of a thoroughly profitable day.

The path now is across the bridge and down the canal on the other side. Candidly, it is not much use fishing now till we get to the river again, half a mile away, below the next lock. I usually put on a small fly and make a cast here and there as I go, as there are plenty of dace in places, some of them big enough to go into glass cases ; but when I add that I have never even hooked one of these veterans, you will understand why I do not recommend too long a tarrying over them. The little ones can be caught easily enough, but then, so can they anywhere.

We owe many debts of gratitude to our railways, and one of them is the effect that they have had on the canals by reducing the traffic and letting Nature have a hand in beautifying them. Where man comes but seldom beauty will permanently abide, and many of our canals nowadays are joyous places for the man with eyes in his head. Of course, the thing may go too far, and a canal may become absolutely derelict and choked up if there is no traffic on it at all. Just enough barges to make it necessary to keep channel and locks in repair —that is what one wants, and that is what one gets here. But the traffic is not heavy enough to interfere with fish or fowl, and if you see one barge in the day that will be all.

The result is that, despite the towing-path and parallel banks, the canal is a beautiful place, with beds of sedges, luxurious marginal plants, bushes that sometimes kiss the water on the other side, and plenty of bird-life. Moorhens and dabchicks splash, dabble, and dive with pleasing indifference to strange featherless bipeds on the bank, and somewhere between the locks you are almost sure to see the turquoise and emerald flash that is a kingfisher. Even an otter would not be impossible; at any rate, I have seen one a little way below the lock, where the canal and river are one again.

To this point of meeting we are now come, and it is an important place which demands a pause. First,

there is the lock itself, with its constant little waterfall from the sluices. I always fish the lock, letting a small worm down into the deep, troubled water, and I generally get a bite or two. If there were any justice in things, one would catch a perch at every visit, but in point of fact, I have never caught anything in the lock except chub and dace. Once I hooked a big trout with a fly, and had an anxious time debating how I was to get him out, since my net was too short to reach down to the water, and the lower gates, generally left open, happened to be shut. The trout solved the problem for me by getting off.

Below the lock the junction of river and canal is celebrated in a big pool, which contains fine store of fish. Once when the river was low and the sun strong, I saw a monstrous perch lying right out in the middle of it. He was quite out of reach, as desirable things so often are. The best time to fish this pool is in winter, when the river is more or less in flood. Then the fish collect into the slack, deep water at the lock-mouth, and take a worm freely. So, at least, I am told, for I have never found the conditions quite right for that fishing. But it is what one would expect, for a first rule of flood-fishing is to find some slack water not too far away from the main stream.

In hot summer the chief use of this place is for a man to sit on the steep, sloping bank and watch the nature of fishes while he eats his luncheon. The water is 5 or

6 feet deep, but very clear, and if you remain quite still you will see a shoal of roach, a troop of dace, and perhaps a perch or two, come cruising round every few minutes. The roach will nibble bits of weed as they go, the dace will sometimes worry in the gravel for larvæ, sometimes come swiftly to the surface and seize a morsel that floats. The perch seldom do anything definite, but appear to wander round as it were in sympathy. Now and then a big, burly shape will sail slowly into view, take a good look round, and sail slowly away again. That is a chub of some 4 pounds, playing, perhaps, at being a policeman.

Sometimes, after you have been sitting on the bank for five minutes or so, it will dawn upon you that what you took for an outlying strip of weeds or a stick is something else—a pike, in fact. The pike has a marvellous gift of identifying himself with his surroundings. Disturb a pike of 18 inches in a small, clear pool, which contains one patch of weeds 6 inches across. At first, of course, you will see nothing save a swirl and a cloud of mud. Wait till things have settled down, and look again. There is the tiny weed-patch, and nothing else in sight. Yet study it attentively, and you will see that its shape is a little altered. Worry this thought out, and you will eventually find that the weed-patch has altered its shape, because from one end of it projects a misty tail, from the other a shadowy head. Unless

you looked attentively, though, you would never detect the lurking fish.

Once you have spotted your pike in the deep pool, it is worth while watching him, as you might have the luck to see him feed, and also to see his mind making itself up beforehand. Dr. Francis Ward has described and photographed the various moods of pike as observed in his observation pond, but to some extent the angler can see the like for himself. If the fish is absolutely still and torpid, not much may be expected "while you wait," but if the fins are quivering noticeably, or if the body is moving its position, something will very likely happen. Pike have a habit of "aiming" themselves at their prey, altering their direction so slowly that you hardly realize they are doing so. But once they are pointed towards what they want, and have made up their mind to have it, they act like lightning. The actual strike is as quick as the aiming was slow.

It is sometimes possible to tease a torpid pike into taking a bait. Only last summer I found a fish of about 2 pounds in a chalk-stream, and desired to get him out of it for the sake of the trout. I had no tackle except dry-fly gear, but I put on a big sedge, soaked it, and proceeded to make it pass jerkily at the side of the fish. Two or three casts had no effect, but then I saw the process of aiming begin, and after another cast or two the strike came, and the pike was hooked, played for a longish time, and finally landed.

A biggish fly worked jerkily under water is not at all a bad lure for pike in hot weather and shallow water, but some luck is required in hooking the fish. If you hook him in the corner of the mouth so that the teeth cannot touch the gut, all will be well, but if the fly is taken too far down, good-bye to him.

Luncheon over, it has to be decided what shall be done next. We might go on downstream following the towing-path, which for the next half-mile accompanies the river proper. Fishing the worm as we did by the White Bridge, we might get another perch or two, or with the fly it might be possible to catch a brace of chub under the line of willows at the swing-gate. We might even remain where we are and throw out a worm as far as possible into the pool, awaiting a bite in patience.

Or—but no; we are out for unusual experiences, so let us to the Moor Stream, and endeavour to catch one of those crafty roach or dace which live in it practically unaffected by the wiles of man. We have to climb two stiles and cross two meadows to get to this tributary of the main river. The two streams run a parallel course of a couple of miles before the smaller is merged in the greater. Here and there, near bridges or sluice-gates, the Moor Stream boasts a deep pool, and in every deep pool live a few coarse fish—dace and roach, with, perhaps, an odd perch and a sprinkling of small jack.

The fish are well fed, for the stream, though small, would be a splendid trout preserve if it were properly looked after, but they are not numerous, and few are caught. Doubtless, they know practically everything that a fish needs to know about "those who come bearing gifts," as the poet puts it. A capture does not reward one at every visit, but the difficulty of the quest makes it interesting, and if one should get a fish it might well be worth stuffing.

Here we are at the bridge pool, and, screened by the withies that line this side of it, let us take our observations. The pool is an oval, 30 feet long, 15 wide, and 6 or 7 deep in the deepest part. There is in it somewhere a shoal of roach numbering perhaps a dozen, but weighing in the mass quite 20 pounds. One or two of the fish must be 2½ pounds each. Then there are a few dace, of which three at least weigh a pound or more, while the others cannot be under ¾ pound. I have been told also that there is a mighty perch, but him I have never seen. The Eagle-eyed One knows him, and caught his little brother a while back. The little brother weighed over 2 pounds.

Not a fish is in sight. With the sun at this angle we can see to the bottom of the pool, and it is obvious that neither roach nor dace are there, unless they are buried in the weeds, which in such weather is not likely. Probably they are cruising in the shallow, shaded water above the bridge—a safe haunt, to which neither fly nor

bait can be insinuated, because of over-arching willow and bramble. Nor can you float a bait down from above, because agriculture has thoughtfully stretched a wire across the stream, and Nature has used it as a foundation for a stout collection of weed débris. There is not a safer spot for fishes in the kingdom, and the fishes know it.

The only chance for an angler is when the blessed restlessness of the tribe brings them into the pool below the bridge. As they pass there is a possibility of their taking a bait if it is deftly brought to their notice. But if they don't come—there they are, swimming down-stream under the bridge: one, two, three, five of them, all dace. See that fellow with the mark near his tail; if he does not weigh $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds, may I never catch him!

Now for the attack. Neither paste nor worm would be much good in this clear, still water, and the best lure would be a bluebottle if we could get him. But of all hopeless quests, give me the hunt for a bluebottle in an open field. Indeed, it is a difficult matter to catch any kind of fly in the open if you have no equipment for the venture, save zeal and a hat. The man who wants to go in seriously for the art of dibbling, made classic by Izaak Walton, ought to have a butterfly-net. We cannot catch flies here, but in the long, coarse grass there are grasshoppers, and they are brave bait for big dace.

We have one, and it is on the little roach-hook. Now let us twitch it gently on to the pool as if it were an artificial dry fly. When the dace next swim past one of them is certain to rise at it. Here they come, returning from the bottom of the pool to the shelter of the bridge. Will the big fellow do what is expected of him? No, confound him! he is gone by, and the other pounders too. They know too much. But one of the smaller ones is less wary or more hungry. See, it approaches the grasshopper, apparently gives it minute inspection, nibbles at it, and then takes it right into its mouth. A gentle strike from the rod-top and the fish is hooked. There is a gleam of silver as the dace goes down to the bottom, the rod bends, and then, alack! it straightens again. We have not caught a dace after all. I know not why it is, but it is no easy matter to drive the hook well home when the bait is a grasshopper. Perhaps the horny nature of the insect interferes with the penetration of the hook, and the fly-rod is too lissom to counteract this. The scientific dibbler uses a stiff rod, and only fishes under its point. He has a bullet on his cast to hold the line steady, and lowers the fly or grasshopper till it just touches the water. But Walton has told all about this method, and on his instructions no modern could improve.

As for our fishing, it is over. The shoal of dace will not recover from its alarm for hours, and by the time

confidence is restored the light will be all wrong for seeing them in this pool. Fishing by sight is only possible here while the sun is still fairly high. Our wisest plan is to go leisurely home with hopes of tea. The basket is pretty heavy, and I doubt whether any of the brotherhood will be able to show better results for the day.

CHAPTER XII

EELS

I HAVE not often gone out wilfully and of set purpose to angle for eels, and I do not suppose that many other anglers cultivate this branch of the sport with much assiduity. Of course they catch plenty, but the capture is incidental to some other kind of fishing, and it is almost always a prelude to lamentation. Hardly any catastrophe in angling has such marked effects as the tussle with an eel, supposing that the creature has once got its head. A horrible tangle of gut and float, line, rod, and net, with a slimy and profane angler in the middle of it—that is what may happen. And as for the eel, having done its work, it will have broken the hook, escaped into the long grass, and vanished, doubtless to return to the water when it thinks it is no longer observed.

There are decidedly good grounds for looking on a chance eel with feelings "closely bordering on aversion." Even a little one will make your life a misery unless you are very prompt and firm with it. And an

aggravation of the trouble is that usually you are not prepared in your mind to be prompt and firm. It is a hot day, nothing has happened for some time, your float is asleep on slumbering waters, and you yourself are sunk in midsummer reverie, soothed by the hum of bees and the flicker of sun-rays through the leaves. How are you to know that down in the depths a sinuous creature is gradually absorbing the worm? It does it with a skill and deftness that would do credit to the most expert of pickpockets. Were you very wide awake, you would perceive a faint twitch of the float about once in half a minute, and you might realize your danger. On the other hand, you might not, for these twitches could be interpreted as the preliminaries to a tench bite; and of course you want to catch a tench very much, and would not for the life of you do anything to prejudice that satisfaction.

So the slow business goes on, and after a long series of these barely visible twitches, probably the float sinks ¼ inch deeper in the water and remains in that position. The change is so slight that even then you hardly realize that anything has happened. Perhaps a dreamy idea that the float has been making itself a little more comfortable passes over the serene surface of your mind like a wind-shadow over a sunny sea. And then without further warning the float is gone! Much surprised, you strike involuntarily, feel a stout resistance, play the unknown and therefore awe-inspiring fish with anxious

care, and realize too late, when the resistance ceases, that you have hold of a 14-inch eel, which should have been hauled out and grabbed in a duster without a moment's hesitation. As things are, the eel comes out in a complicated knot, and the rest of the affair is as already described.

All this is not in the eel's favour, and yet I have a kind of affection for the beast. The mystery of its existence and habits is attractive. For instance, what can be more inspiring to an angler than the discovery of some piece of water where such strange things happen that people look at it askance? Ducklings and young moorhens vanish without any apparent cause, and strong men have had strong tackle broken by inexplicable monsters. It is well known that there are no pike in the pond, a few roach and carp of no great size being the only fish it holds. How, then, shall such things be caused? The adventurous angler murmurs to himself "Eels," and is only too delighted if he has a chance of proving it.

I once made a long and tedious journey to a pond of this reputation—a small place set in the middle of a grass field and surrounded by bushes. Several anglers had told me how they had been broken there, and I was equipped with strong tackle and some live baits. I spent a solemn morning in angling without the least result, and should doubtless have continued till dewy eve, had not a compassionate agriculturist informed me,

not without smiles, that the pond was empty of fish-life now. Doubtless its reputation had inspired others besides myself, and an explanation of its problems had been sought with lime. The result had been a long death-roll of unimportant roach and carp and of a number of big eels, which was satisfying so far as testing a theory went, but did not make for fortunate angling afterwards.

I have no doubt that there are plenty of ponds scattered about green England where big eels exist in an equally mysterious manner. One theory with regard to eels of exceptional size in such places is, I believe, that they are barren, and so do not need to return to the sea as most of their fellows do. Living on and on in fresh water, they may go on growing indefinitely, and after reaching a weight of 5 or 6 pounds, they would naturally make short work of the ordinary roach or perch tackle that would be used in their waters. They would also be quite able to devour ducklings, and being practically invisible they would become a mysterious agency for destruction—recognized, indeed, but never rightly understood, until the pond was drained or their existence was brought to light in some other way.

I should never have appreciated the full capabilities of eels but for an accident many years ago which made me aware that a certain Gloucestershire pond held fish of prey of some kind, besides the roach and carp for which I used to set my snares. Assuming that these

fish of prey were pike, I then tried a live bait on float tackle. There were runs, but at first no captures, and it was only after several failures that a big eel of some 3½ pounds was found to have swallowed the roach of 7 or 8 inches that was used as bait. The pond must have been full of these eels, some of them a good deal bigger than that, and it was a curious thing that they would seize a bait which was some distance off the bottom. This shows that eels are not exclusively bottom-feeders. Indeed, since those days I have often seen them swimming at midwater, apparently in search of prey, and I think that at night they must be pretty active and ubiquitous.

Three or four unusual experiences with eels stand out in my memory. One was on the Stratford Avon on a pouring day in early September. I do not like heavy rain for any kind of fishing, as it is usually an accompaniment of barometric disturbances which are certainly bad for sport; and though I have fished through many deluges, I do not remember getting many catches worth mentioning while the rain was falling. But this afternoon on the Avon was exceptional. I fished with a worm on float-tackle just above the floating raft of a boat-builder, allowed the worm to swim under the raft, and held the float back just at the edge of the timber.

I was hoping to get a few perch, and the first bite made me think that I had found them. The float

dipped and went boldly under in the manner dear to the perch-fisher. But the biter proved to be an eel of about ½ pound. There followed a strange piece of sport, and for some time I caught eels literally as fast as I could manipulate the tackle. There was none of the nibbling and niggling that is characteristic of small eels, every bite being business-like and decided. I do not remember exactly how many I landed in all, but the number was somewhere in the twenties. The eels were also much of a size, from ½ to ¾ pound.

Another instance of a similar kind was experienced on a shallow lake in Dorsetshire, where I was also fishing for perch with a worm. A small island was divided from the shore by a channel some 20 feet wide, and, fishing in this channel in about 3 feet of water, I caught about a dozen eels in quick succession, and very likely could have caught more had I not wearied of it. These eels were bigger, running from about ¾ pound up to 1½ pounds.

Once or twice, too, I have had a brisk hour with Thames eels, in the reach between Day's Lock and Shillingford. I hooked an eel of over 2 pounds there on fine roach-tackle once, which fought for a very long time before I could get him into the landing-net. I do not know any other fish of similar weight which would have given so long a fight, except, perhaps, a sea-trout.

Eels are, in fact, very strong, and if they were a little quicker in taking a bait, did not insist so often on swallowing it, and did not tangle up the line so, they

would be far from negligible as sporting fish. Even as things are, if you catch an eel in a river you have the satisfaction of knowing that it will be very good eating when properly cooked. When it is cut up into small pieces, delicately stomached folk will not perhaps realize that it *is* eel, and they will ask for more. That sort of little triumph is always pleasing.

Most of my eel-fishing has been done with worms, but I am convinced that to catch the very big ones you must use fish, either alive or dead, and live ones for choice. A small gudgeon hooked by the lip on a stout perch-hook is probably as good a bait as any, and you would not have to wait so long before striking as if you were using a bigger bait, such as the roach with which I used to fish in the pond mentioned earlier. Those roach were, on the face of it, much too large for the purpose, and that they were taken so freely shows how voracious eels are. In fishing a river, keep your bait at the bottom, and if you are really out for a monster, fish at night.

When hooked, an eel is sometimes immovable, possibly because it gets into a hole or cranny, possibly because it has its tail round a stick. If you hang on steadily it will move sooner or later, and, once moving, it should not give much trouble. For eels which may run over 3 pounds I should advise strong sea-trout gut, with which you can put on a great strain and avoid tanglesome delays. Perch-tackle is strong enough for

ordinary purposes, though it may be necessary to sacrifice a hook or two.

For landing eels you want a net with a small mesh. Through a net of ordinary mesh they will assuredly writhe their way if they are not more than about a pound, and it is an absurd position for the angler to be in, when he has to replay his fish through the unsympathetic mesh of his net. It is bad enough with a fish, and with an eel the position is hopeless.

Having netted your eel, empty him quickly on to the grass, and then place your foot on him just behind the neck. If the hook is in his mouth, you can take it out easily before killing or returning him. If he has swallowed it, you must either cut it off or else kill him and then perform a surgical operation. The only sure way to kill an eel is to sever the spinal column by sticking a sharp knife in at the back of the neck. Even after that, muscular action may continue for some time, but I think the eel is dead none the less. A shrewd blow with a stick in the tail region will stun or paralyze an eel, though it may not kill him. Do not grasp a newly-landed eel with the hand, or he will at once coil his tail round your sleeve and wrist, and the slime which results from that is bad for both clothing and temper. And if an eel has escaped and is wriggling through a bed of rushes towards the water, give him up as a bad job. I think only an otter is capable of catching him then without hopeless loss of dignity.

CHAPTER XIII

PIKE

August? My dear fellow, the sheep-like simplicity with which the whole world takes its holiday in August is absurd. It means that all the world gets only a quarter of the joys that existence has to offer. Now you are become an angler you will soon know better. It is necessary to your angling that you should employ your holiday to the best advantage. Break it up. Convert it into two holidays, or even three, and see if you do not double the interest and excitement of life. Here are we, for instance, about to take an unheard-of kind of holiday—four whole days in mid-February, that miserable month devoted to the filling of dykes in the country and the catching of colds in town. A depressing prospect, is it not, when you think of the glorious sunshine flooding sea and sand that all the world is to enjoy next August!

And yet—yes, that's our trap—what is the matter with *this* sunshine? It's bright enough and warm enough to put new life into a man after the mirk and

damp draughts of winter in London. Like April, as you say, or, rather, like an imagined April that you find in the poets. To confide to you a great secret, real April weather is popped into February nearly every year, and nobody knows about it except we pike-fishers. That is one reason why I make great efforts annually to snatch a few days in this month.

Another reason is that it's about the best time of the year for pike-fishing, and offers the best chance of that 20-pounder which you so much wish to see decorating your study wall, with all his long length displayed to advantage under glass. Of course, you may fish a good many Februarys without catching such a pike, but you always have the consoling thought that if it is ever to come to you at all it ought to come at that time.

Yes, that is the river winding along there where the willows are. After about two miles the road drops down from the downs, and we get closer to it, close enough to see the trout rising if it were June and Mayfly time. Yes, I've known colder days when I've been Mayfly-fishing. A queer business this climate of ours, which gives us spring weather before it is due, and when it is due probably withholds it. But the very uncertainty has its attractions. Surely such a day as this, now, is like that pleasant, yet nowadays dangerous, thing, unearned increment! We had no right to it, but we've got it. And we are enjoying it all the more because we oughtn't to have it. That's human nature!

There ought to be primroses and buds and birds'-nests, as you say. But we mustn't demand too much. We've got what is, after all, the most wonderful effect of spring, the first faint stirring of Nature after winter sleep. You can't see it, unless the emerald of the grass is a sign, or unless we can read secrets in the rich brown of yonder plough-land. But you can feel it—it's in the air, and that lark is singing about it. Some men have been able to do more than feel Nature's stirring—men with the inner vision, like Richard Jefferies. Undoubtedly he saw more than he could express, and he has expressed more than any writer of whom I have knowledge.

Fig. 30. — Avon Snap-Trolling Tackle. (Farlow.)

I have sympathy with your impatience. The horse is truly a slow one. It belonged to an undertaker before it entered this service, and observes the regulation pace.

No, I was not present at the sale. I argue from the general to the particular. All horses which meet anglers at country stations have belonged to undertakers.

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Put the tackle on like this: lead pushed down the mouth, spikes in the sides, and top hook through the root of the tail. Now you are ready for the game of snap-trolling, which is,

I think, likely to pay better to-day than spinning. The river is full, and swirling along at a great pace (thanks to the recent rains), and if I know anything of pike, they'll be lying pretty snug in the eddies and bays just out of the force of the stream. It is but a small river, and there is scarcely room to spin a bait in these places; it would hardly be in before it would be out again.

Fig. 31. — Avon Tackle, Baited.

But by trolling you can fish each of them thoroughly from end to end. The manner of it is this: you drop the dace quietly into the water, and then quickly lower the point of the rod. The result is that the bait shoots head-first towards the bottom; just before it touches you check it with the rod, pull it slowly up 2 or 3 feet, and then let it go again. The effect of the fishing is that the dace is always shooting off in some new direction—sometimes straight down, sometimes at an acute angle to right or left, out into the river, or in towards the bank. This variety of movement I take to be attractive to the pike, for it seldom fails to produce what we call "runs."

I fancy this must be one of the most ancient modes of pike-fishing. It is certainly older than spinning, and during Walton's lifetime it was considered worthy of a book all to itself—"The Complete Troller" of Mr. Nobbes.

But our forefathers trolled with a gorge-hook, a thing which is discountenanced nowadays because its use means the death of every pike landed, be it large or small. A two-pronged leaded hook in its vitals does not give an unfortunate fish a chance.

Our tackle, as you see, has its hooks outside the bait, and when a pike has seized it we can strike at once. A small pike can be returned unhurt, the tackle works a bait as attractively as did the old gorge-hook, and there is none of the long waiting for five or ten minutes by the watch until the bait should have been swallowed that was necessary under the old régime. Altogether it is an improvement. The only clear superiority of the gorge style was that you could fish in weedy places, the points of the double hook hardly projecting from the bait at all. The new tackle, it must be admitted, is handicapped in the weeds. But one can't have everything. If weeds are bad where you are fishing, strengthen the bait somewhat by a few turns of fine copper wire round both it and the gimp or wire of the hook-flight. That will prevent the hooks tearing away from the bait when you are pulling weeds out, and it will save the temper from a good deal of strain. The same device is useful in spinning, too.

The bait has worked all over the bay now, and nothing has happened. Let's go on to the next. This ought to be a sure find. The roots of that willow at the top end divert the stream outwards, and it presently comes round

in a sweep and makes a slow, deep backwash along the sedges which fringe the bank. If there isn't a pike in this quiet resting-place and quite close to the sedges, I'll eat my hat. There! did you see? A gleam in the water some 3 feet down. That was a fish sure enough, but he didn't touch it. Have at him again. Keep the bait working up and down just where he showed.

There he is, and this time he's got it. You didn't feel a tug because the line was slack when he seized the bait, which was darting down at the time—pike mostly seize the bait on its downward course—but you felt a sort of thrill, didn't you—something which showed you that things were altered somehow? And now the line is moving outwards, which settles it. Strike, and strike hard. He's on all right. All you've got to do now is to keep your line taut, and put as steady a strain on as you can. There he goes out into the stream, making the reel sing as it yields line. Keep your finger on the rim of the reel so that he shan't have line too easily, and also that he may not get it slack. Yes, of course, you mustn't get your other fingers in the way of the handles. You may be grateful that he wasn't travelling any faster, or you'd have been hurt more.

He's turned, and he won't be long now. He's not a very big fish, but I think he's sizeable. Bring him in quietly, and I'll get the gaff in. There you are, gaffed at the point of balance a little behind the shoulder, and weighing, I should say, 6 pounds. Had he been much

smaller we'd have slithered him out over the sedges so that he might not be hurt, but as it is he's fair prey. I'll just hit him on the head with the priest, and then we'll have the hooks out.

FIG. 32.—PIKE GAG.

A gag and a disgorger are indispensable to the pike-fisher. Here is the one—simple, inexpensive, and efficient—and the other is inside the priest. Never try to unhook a pike with your fingers only. There is danger from his wicked teeth, and there is also danger from some triangle that may be hanging loose. If he is not quite dead and gives a

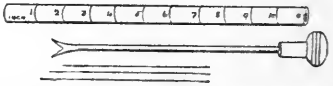

FIG. 33.—THE ELLISON PRIEST, CONTAINING DISGORGER AND BAITING-NEEDLES. (FARLOW.)

kick, you are quite likely to find a triangle in your hand while its fellow is attached to the fish. You shudder at the idea, so doubtless you will take the due precautions. A small fish, even though alive, can generally be held firmly by the gag, while the disgorger levers the hooks out.

There, he's unhooked, and can be placed in the bag, or, if you prefer, left on the bank till we return. It is, perhaps, unwise to carry 6 pounds of fish farther than one is obliged. The shoulder-strap cuts into the shoulder soon enough without that, for the box of tackle, the

dead baits, and other impedimenta, weigh something. It is not easy to lighten the load in pike-fishing, for you must carry a good deal, and many of the items are weighty for their size. Spinning and trolling leads, for instance, soon add ounces to the total. In some places I should hesitate to leave a fish on the bank, for fear of marauders, two or four-legged. But here, I think, it will be all right. We are a longish way from any farm, so there are not likely to be any rats about at this time of year. Water-voles will not, I think, touch a fish so big as this. Anyhow, we'll risk it.

Yes, you're right; it's becoming a regular swamp along here. I expect these meadows are pretty wet even in summer, and, of course, after winter rains they're worse. Luckily rubber knee-boots are designed for these emergencies. A wise man never essays pike-fishing from the bank without them, or, for that matter, any other kind of winter fishing. Dry feet may not be exactly the panacea for all ills, but wet ones are at any rate the root of a good many. At best they make one feel uncomfortable. Two pairs of thick stockings and unlined india-rubber boots are the angler's safeguard.

You would hardly think this a trout stream, would you? It is somehow more suggestive of pike and chub, with its old stumps lying here and there, its deep rushy corners, and reaches of sedge and willow. It is a trout stream, none the less; at any rate, it holds a good many trout. It is, indeed, one of the few rivers I know which

are in a natural state, with trout, pike, and coarse fish all living together without any interference by man. A sort of balance has been established, and the trout are more numerous than might be expected. They run large, of course, and in Mayfly time I fancy the average is well over 2 pounds.

As for the pike, we do not know very much about them. To tell the truth, they are not much fished for. But a valued friend caught one of over 19 pounds not very long ago, and presently you shall see the place where, history relates, a fish of more than 30 pounds was once killed. I myself have once seen an indubitable monster farther down, and I am sure there must be plenty of big ones for the catching. But big pike are fickle creatures, and you must be there at exactly the right time or you will never catch one. When is the right time? That's what we all want to find out.

The more I study big pike, the more I am perplexed as to their feeding. I am quite sure they do not feed so often as small ones, and I think, when they do feed, their meals are very thorough. They eat heartily, and then digest at leisure, like snakes. Sometimes their dinner is a prolonged festival. One big pike which I knew well fed daily for at least a week, and broke several persons who yearned to assist him. At the end of the week he was caught—I caught him myself; why false modesty about these little triumphs?—but had he not been caught I am pretty sure he would have relapsed

into obscurity once more. The big waves and mighty swirls would have ceased, and very likely men would have said that the pike had gone away, until after an interval he began to feed again. Of course, these big fish may take much of their food near the bottom, but baits, when pursued, hurry to the top, and in any case a 20-pound fish can scarcely move rapidly about in a not very big river without betraying some signs of his presence.

Three runs in one eddy and not a fish to show for it! I am afraid that looks bad. The pike are not keen or you would, at any rate, have hooked one of them. There is a slight haze coming over the southern sky that I do not much like, and I suspect rain by nightfall. Probably the glass is going down too. What is the precise effect of atmospheric pressure on fish I do not know, but I gravely mistrust the omen of a falling glass. And the quicker it falls, the more I mistrust it. Pike, in my experience, are peculiarly susceptible to low pressure, and they show it, first by running in a half-hearted fashion, and next by not running at all. They are evidently at the first stage now. We may yet pick up another fish or two to-day. To-morrow, I fear, we shall catch little or nothing. And it will rain all day. Never mind, let us enjoy the sunshine while we have it. And we'll try spinning for a change as we work back downstream. I want, ultimately, to try the place where the 30-pounder was caught. In high water I

believe it to be about the best bit in the river. We must remember, by the way, to pick up our 6-pounder as we go.

This is the simple old Dee spinning-flight—a couple of triangles tied to a length of twisted wire and a queer-shaped lead. You thread the wire through the bait with a baiting-needle, which you insert near the vent and bring out through the mouth. We will try a gudgeon for a change. Catch the hooks in the tail of the bait, slip the lead over the wire and put it into the bait's mouth, and the lure is ready. Now fasten the loop to the loop-swivel at the end of the trace and you can begin. More lead would be wanted if you intended to fish right across the stream, but as the fish are sure to be close to the bank now, there is no point in long casting, and the lead in the bait's mouth will be quite enough.

Fig. 34.

I should not worry about casting from the reel. You only want to cast out about 10 yards and let the bait work slowly round to this bank, and you can give it more life and motion if you fish from the coil. Oh, well, give me the rod. There, it's done like that. You just cast out and brake the rim of the reel with a finger. Not see how it's done? Well, if I must try to explain, here goes. If you don't want to waste part of a fishing-day in learning, you can eventually pick it up for your-

self by practising in a garden or a meadow. It may be a slow and painful business, but it can be done. Alone *I* did it, to use the language of melodrama. But with one who knows by your side, you could learn in a tenth of the time. To-morrow, perhaps, if sport is as dull as I expect, you shall take a solemn lesson.

The secret of the thing is to begin with a heavy enough bait. Put, say, a 4-inch Nottingham reel on a pike-rod and fasten a weight of 2½ ounces (which is the heaviest used in ordinary tournaments) to the end of the line. Take hold of the rod, right hand above the reel, left hand below it, and so close to it that the first finger can rest on the rim of the revolving side—of, that is to say, the handle side. This finger is free from the rod (which is grasped by the thumb and other fingers), and its side comes naturally and easily against the rim to which it is to act as a brake. Having found a comfortable grip, next decide from which side you want to cast—from the left (*i.e.*, with a back-handed action of the right hand) or from the right. For fishing one ought to be able to cast in both ways, but probably one or the other will seem more natural to start with. If from the left, stand with the right foot forward in the direction of the cast and the body turned somewhat to the left; if from the right, left foot forward and body to the right. For a left-handed man these directions are reversed, of course.

The attitude achieved, wind up the line till about

1½ yards of it lie between rod-top and weight, push back the button of the check and so make the reel free-running, and keep the forefinger of the left hand pressed against the rim, so that the drum cannot move. The next thing is to get the swing, which at first need be only a small affair, starting with the rod-point well behind the body and at an angle of about 45 degrees from the ground, and ending with the rod-point a little in front of it. Quite a gentle swing will suffice to begin with, and by gradually relaxing the pressure of the braking finger, you will find that the bait travels easily, and can, as it were, be "felt" the whole time. The braking finger is very sensitive to its progress, and can allow or impede it at any moment. This is, indeed, the vital principle of casting, to establish the sympathy between finger and bait, and it is most easily done with a heavy bait, which, in a short cast at any rate, requires braking the whole time. The pressure is gradually relaxed during the swing, is only just maintained after the rod-point stops moving and while the bait travels, and is gradually increased when its momentum begins to fail. Very short casts will suffice for a beginning, the principle not depending on distance.

Once the casting of a heavy bait a short distance with the brake applied the whole time is mastered, the achievement of a longer distance or the use of a lighter bait becomes fairly simple. A longer distance needs a more powerful swing and less braking; a lighter bait

needs less braking still, and during most of the cast a completely free reel. But the transition from a finger lightly touching the revolving rim to a finger just not touching, but ready to do so at any moment, is not difficult with a little practice. The process by which the finger first touches and then gradually presses on the rim becomes instinctive. As casting becomes more ambitious other difficulties arise, such as the tendency to press and to exaggerate the follow through, to borrow golfing terms. The swing even for a long cast should be easy, and with no suspicion of jerk about it—power, pace, and steadiness are quite compatible—and the rod-point should never be brought too far forward at the end of it, or the direction is bound to suffer. If a longer swing is wanted, lengthen it at the beginning, not at the end. Some men in long casting turn right round and begin their swing with their faces in the opposite direction to that of their aim. But in actual fishing so long a swing as this implies is seldom required. All these things, however, are matters which you will soon realize for yourself once you have made a beginning; and you will also find that light weights, ½ ounce or less, require the smallest and lightest reel you can get for easy casting, and that they are perhaps best managed with a single-handed rod. The principle of this is the same, save that one hand has to do both holding and braking. It is well with the double-handed rod to get into the way of braking with both

hands. The little finger of the hand above the reel can be used as easily and efficiently as the forefinger of the other.

Men who go in for long-distance casting at tournaments generally use light undressed silk lines, but for actual fishing I counsel a dressed line of reasonable strength, such as that on the reel now. You can cast with it quite far enough for practical purposes, and you have the advantage of being able also to use it for spinning from the coil. It is well, even when you can cast from the reel, not altogether to lose touch with the older method, which has certain advantages. It requires less swing, and can therefore be employed in places which are cramped by bushes and trees, and for most people it proves more accurate, a consideration where you have to cast your bait into one particular spot or get hung up on obstructions. Furthermore, in winter pike-fishing it is very useful to be able to vary the style of casting, and so give the hands a chance to get warm. For the right-handed man it is the right hand that keeps warm in casting from the reel, because it is constantly winding in; in casting from the coil the left hand gets a chance, as it gathers in the line coil by coil.

No, the fish are not very responsive, so we won't waste much time over this part of the water. A cast here and there as we go, for the sake of appearances, and we will go steadily downstream to where the 30-pounder used to live. It's about a mile.

Baits? Well, I don't think there's much to choose between them. Dace, gudgeon, and roach, are the most easily procured, and all are effective. For ordinary purposes a bait from 5 to 6 inches long is the best, but in very clear water a very small one may answer better. Even a 2½-inch minnow has accounted for big pike before now. But if I knew of a monster and were making a dead set at him in winter, I should use the biggest bait I could manage—a dace, say, of 9 or 10 inches in length. And for spinning I should fix it on a flight of hooks which would give it a big curve and make it

Fig. 35.—One of the Pennell Flights.

revolve through the water in wide, slow sweeps. A heavy lead is needed with a big bait, so that you may fish it as near to the bottom as you can. The monsters must, from the nature of things, be somewhat dignified in their movements, and it is hardly to be expected that a somnolent 20-pounder lying, say, 8 feet below the surface would or could dart up at a bait which is 6 feet above his head and only in his view for a moment of time. A live bait on a paternoster might possibly tempt him to come up so far, because it would be in his view much longer. A pike will often take a bait which has been in front of him for a considerable time,

although he was apparently not in humour for feeding when he was first observed. It may be this fact that has made live-baiting more efficacious with the big ones than spinning. If one could keep a natural bait revolving slowly just in front of a pike's nose for several minutes, the chances are that he would take it at last even more readily than a live bait. The sight of a fish gyrating in the water is undoubtedly a stimulus to appetite, or indignation, or curiosity, or all three.

Proximity also must have much to do with it, and the nearer the bait is to a pike, the better is the chance of getting a run out of him, especially if he be a heavy one. A dace spinning through the water in wide sweeping curves near the bottom must go very close to any fish lying there, and it ought to be just as likely to tempt them as a live bait below a float travelling down with the stream. But it must be able to travel near the bottom, or it will not get near enough to any pike worth having, unless he happens to be actively on the feed and out of his usual resting-place. A large bait, a dace of some 8 or 9 inches, is more likely to do the trick, not only because Esox likes a mouthful, but also because with a big dace one can spin more slowly than with a small one. It is easier, moreover, to induce it to move in the sweeping manner described, which is so attractive. A powerful rod, of course, is required, for the bait and lead together make up a considerable weight. Most pike-rods of the old-fashioned sort are

equal to the work, but it would be a pity to demand so much of the lighter rods which are now coming into favour.

The preservation of baits is a matter to which pike-fishers have given much attention, since fresh baits are not always to be procured. If you only want a supply for three or four days in winter, as on this occasion, the baits will keep perfectly fresh by being packed in a box full of dry bran, and you can carry a dozen for the day's fishing in a cloth or a linen bag.

If you want to keep your baits for, say, a fortnight, salt will help you. Fold a soft cloth into a long strip about 9 inches wide, or less if the baits are small ones, and on it sprinkle a layer of dry salt $\frac{1}{3}$ inch deep. On the salt place the baits in a row, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart, and on them sprinkle another layer of salt. Then roll cloth, baits, and salt into a firm bundle, and keep them in a dry, cool place. Treated thus they will keep fresh for weeks, but they tend to dry up and shrivel, and are certainly not so effective as fresh baits.

A more permanent mode of preservation is that adopted by tackle-makers, by which the baits are kept tough and bright in liquid and sold in bottles. I fancy various tackle-makers have various recipes of their own for bottling baits, but most of them probably use formalin (the 40 per cent. solution sold by chemists) as the basis of their preservatives. The amateur can use

it too, the proportion needed being about one teaspoonful of formalin to a pint of water. Place your baits in a bottle containing this mixture for a few days until the liquid gets discoloured, and then change the liquid. A second change may be required after a few more days, and perhaps a third later. I think the solution should be made slightly weaker at each change, for formalin is a powerful agent, and may easily make the baits too tough.

The nicest-looking baits I have ever seen were some preserved by that famous angler and bait-caster, Mr. J. T. Emery. His method is to give his baits a day or two in formalin solution, and then to transfer them to pure glycerin, which keeps them wonderfully bright.

It also does away with most of the smell, which is rather a serious objection to formalined baits as a rule. Fish naturally do not like the flavour, and I am quite sure that they will only take a formalined bait *well* when they are hungry and ready to dash at anything. If, as sometimes happens, they are in a fastidious mood and inclined to look gift baits in the mouth, a strong flavour of formalin is sure to put them off. A pike will often follow a spinning-bait for a considerable distance, keeping quite close to it and meditating upon its character. To such a dilatory fish the taint of formalin is certain to be a deterrent. I have found that baits thus treated are almost useless for snap-trolling, probably

because they go closer to the fish and give them more chance of accurate observations.

Sprats survive the treatment better than most fish, because they have a strong fishlike smell of their own, and of all formalined baits for pike I prefer them. Messrs. Hardy Brothers preserve sprats in some mixture which apparently contains no formalin and has no objectionable smell. The result is excellent.

There is another little sea-fish which is an admirable bait for pike, and that is the smelt. He has a sheen which is all his own, and he will sometimes rouse enthusiasm among the most blasé fish —fish which have known and rejected all manner of usual lures.

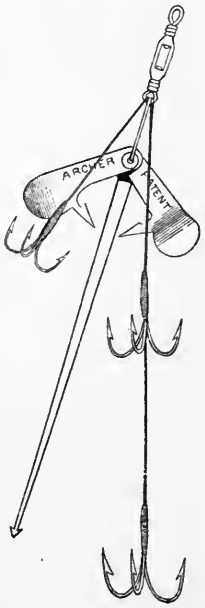

Fig. 36.—The Archer Flight.

But the smelt is of a long, awkward shape, and terribly soft, coming to pieces on the slightest provocation. You can use him on snap-trolling tackle all right, and if you want to spin with him you had better mount him on an Archer spinner or some such engine and strengthen him with copper wire. The fans of the spinner cause him to revolve. I don't think you *can* make a smelt spin satisfactorily for any length of time

on his own curve—his shape is wrong and his nature too perishable.

Other baits which are worth bearing in mind are sand-eels and the tails (say about 6 inches of them) of ordinary eels. The last are not always easy to procure in winter, but probably a tackle-maker could get you a supply if you gave him time. The eel-tail is a capital bait for very clear water, where a dace or even a gudgeon is too conspicuous to be good medicine; also, it is very durable and strong. Sand-eels are always obtainable, since they are bottled for salmon-fishing purposes. The best tackle on which to put them that I know is one devised by Mr. Philip Geen. It has a metal eel-shaped head, a pair of fans, and a corkscrew spike, which holds the bait quite firmly. Its hooks are arranged much as those of the Archer spinner.

Here we come to a place where a fish might be got. A backwater breaks away from the river, falls over a small weir, and then takes a curly course to rejoin the river below the mill. A biggish bay is formed where the streams part, and there must surely be pike in it, because it gives such a good resting-place from the strength of the main stream. Spin your bait right across, dropping it under the camp sheathing at the far side, letting it sink well, and pulling it slowly home. Hung up? I bet you aren't! Strike, anyhow, and see. Yes, it *does* move, and it's a good one for certain. Keep a perfectly steady strain on, and see what he intends to

do. He means going out into the river. That slow dignity is giving place to impatience. In a moment or two that reel of yours will be singing loudly. Keep the rod-point well up, and don't get flustered. Alack the day! A murrain on him! Plague take him! Perdition——

No, you did nothing wrong. The line never got slack, and you hit him quite hard enough to begin with. Nobody and no tackle would have landed that pike to-day. He wasn't hooked properly. Maybe he wasn't hooked at all, but was just holding on. It's all the fault of the weather, which makes them come so shyly. If he had really meant business, he'd have half-swallowed that small bait and been hooked securely. As it was, he was only interested enough to seize it gingerly, and was able to get rid of it when the pull of the rod became embarrassing. Fish have a marvellous power of avoiding hooks when they choose. Often a salmon will nip a piece out of a prawn which is armed with triangles so thoroughly that you could hardly get the points of a small pair of pliers between them. And in the same way pike will seize a betriangled bait, give you quite a run, and then go off smiling. It's a mystery.

By all means try him again. Let us put on this dace; the gudgeon is too mangled to be tempting now. But I'm afraid it's not much good. If we had a live bait perhaps—but we haven't. The pike was not keen

enough to come again to a spinning-bait after having felt the pull of the rod so decidedly.

Yes, I should try the trolling-bait too. Here it is. Cast it out as you did the spinning-bait, and work it gradually towards you, letting the rod-point drop after every draw of the line. You can't troll so effectively, perhaps, at a distance as close under the point of the rod, but you *can* catch fish in that way. I have caught plenty of pike when the troll has been 25 yards off. One has to work it rather quicker, for fear of getting caught up, but the principle is just the same as when it is fished with a short line.

Satisfied he won't come again? All right; we'll go on down the backwater on the right bank, for it is at the tail end of that that I think we have the best chance to-day. It is rather deep, rather sluggish, and is used by the pike as a spawning-ground. By now fish should be working into it in some numbers, especially since the river is so high. It is a golden rule of pike-fishing to look for a side-stream when there has been a lot of rain and when February is well in. Having arrived, we will lunch without undue delay, and then fall to our angling.

All the way from here to the mouth of the back-water you have a chance, and the troll is certainly better than the spinning-bait, because the stream is narrow, and trolling fishes it with less disturbance and greater thoroughness. Try carefully round every willow

and off every patch of sedges. There you are! Got him almost at once. Ah, only a small one, but never mind. Don't let him kick if you can help it. Play him quietly and steadily, and draw him out. If he doesn't kick the bait may serve again; it's hardly in his mouth, as he's hooked by the lower triangle. Well done! Now for the gag. There, the hook's out, the gag removed, a 2-pounder expeditiously returned, and the bait fit to go on with—hardly a mark on it.

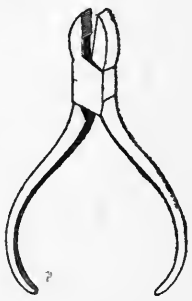

Fig. 37.

Hung up? Yes, you are this time—a beast of a snag; I can see the tip of it. I can't reach it with the gaff, and there's no long stick handy. This is where the clearing-ring would be useful, but I haven't got one. The only thing to do is to push the rod down into the water and to pull the line and trace through the rod-rings until the bait practically touches the top ring. Then by moving the rod up and down, to and fro, you may clear the hooks. Hurrah! It's done it, the bait is still intact, and the hooks are unbroken. The trace has got a kink in it, it's true, but that is easily remedied. The pliers, the reel of wire, and two minutes—here's a new trace for you, fastened to the two swivels that were at either end of the old one. But we won't risk it near that snag again.

I can hardly imagine pike-fishing nowadays without

this single wire, which is the comfort of my life. No risk of rotting, as there used to be with gimp, hardly any expense (a reel of 100 yards costs four shillings), the nearest thing to invisibility imaginable, strength almost beyond ambition, and a new trace made whenever you feel like it. You must have a small pair of pliers with a wire-cutting edge in them, and you carry your swivels in a little box together with one or two of Mr. Geen's swivel-leads, which are the best spinning-leads in the world. The wire is best fastened to the swivel-rings like this. Be careful when you twist the short end

Fig. 38.—The Geen Lead.

Fig. 39.—Fastening Wire to Swivel.

Fig. 40.—A Loop-Swivel.

round not to run the point into your forefinger. It will pierce like a needle if you give it half a chance. The lower swivel, as you see, has a loop at one end which opens to admit the loop of the hook-flight.

Of course, wire is liable to get rusty, and when rusty it may break ; also, it may get a kink in it if it gets badly bent or trodden upon, and then it is no longer to be trusted. In either event a new trace is so easily made that the trouble is of no account. If you want to make up several traces and keep them ready for use, rub them with vaseline or give them a touch of oil, and

keep them in one of those oiled-paper envelopes which tackle-makers lavishly supply when you buy gut-casts. The stock of swivels should also be touched with oil now and then, so that they may not get rusty and jam.

There, that's the kind of run I like to see, what in trout or salmon fishing would be called a "head-and-tail" rise. The pike came at the bait when it was near the top of the water, rose above it, and then took it in descending, making a graceful curve in the operation. It is not often that one gets the sight of a pike which behaves in this way, and when one does, it is an experience to be valued, for seeing a run adds much to the pleasure and excitement of having it.

Also, a fish which takes thus eagerly in all likelihood takes well, and will be well hooked. There is little doubt as to this one. He goes off straight and deep, and pulls hard, with no indecision or head-shaking. Failing accidents, he should be your own. And he is, an honest 7-pounder, I judge, and a fit companion to the 6-pounder we got before. Whatever happens now, there is a brace to show, and a brace of pike on a bad day is not to be despised. The big one that got away? Of course, we always lament him. Honestly, I don't think he was 20 pounds—12 to 14, perhaps. But call him 20 by all means, if you want to. It is done sometimes.

There remains only a little more of the backwater to

be fished, but it is the best part. See how the main stream coming from the mill swirls back under that willow and sweeps round along the clay shelf opposite. See, too, the difference in colour of the two streams. The river is decidedly stained, showing a slight milky tinge, while the backwater is comparatively clear. I don't know how far the theory is correct, but I have a theory that where you get a definite line drawn between clear and coloured water, as here, there you ought to get fish, pike, trout, perch, chub—whatever you are after. I think they all like to lie just in the clear water, ready to seize food which comes to them in the thicker current.

Work the bait carefully across just in the clear area. Now let the stream have it, carry it under the tree, and bring it back along under our bank. Keep your rod-point going all the time. A run? I thought so; and a good fish, too, by the way he moves. Hold him pretty hard. I don't trust either the ledge opposite or the tree on this side, and we don't want snags or roots to complicate matters. Lead him away from the mouth of the backwater if you can, or he may get out into the strong stream and give you a bad time of it round the willow. That's right, simply walk along the bank slowly, and he'll probably follow. Don't touch the reel if you can help it. If you want to get a fish away from a dangerous place, walk him away when you can without winding on him. He will be amenable to a steady,

even coaxing, when the action of the reel would simply make him frantic.

Now you've got him to a pretty safe place, and you can get to work with the reel. His runs won't matter so much here; he will scarcely get so far as the tree. Don't be afraid of the tackle. The trace will stand anything, and the rod is good for a 7-pound pull at need. He's tiring; I saw him turn, and he's certainly bigger than the last. Put on a bit more strain. There you are, as pretty a pike as you will see in a season—small-headed, short, deep, and clad in olive shot with gold. He looks 9 pounds, and will weigh 10 for certain. These short, deep fish are pleasingly deceitful upon the weights. Yes, 10 pounds and a bit over by the spring-balance.

Raining? So it is, by Jove! and if that sky means anything, it means that pretty soon it will be pelting. I vote we make tracks for home and tea. We've done uncommonly well, considering the circumstances, and with three pike, weighing 23 pounds, we need feel no shame. Lucky the bag is a big one. The Tay bag, with its expanding pocket, will hold 40 or 50 pounds of pike without difficulty.

Let you carry them? Certainly I will. The old angler never makes any selfish difficulty about giving his young friends pleasures of this sort. You'll find it heavy going just at the top of the hill, but you won't mind that. Tea, arm-chairs, and a good fire, will be all

the more acceptable for a little trouble in reaching them.

* * * * *

Matches? Here you are—catch! What were we talking about? Oh yes, about artificial spinning-baits. Candidly, I would never use an artificial bait for pike, if I could get natural baits, except the spoon. The spoon-bait is a simple old lure which is still wonderfully effective for most fish of prey. You can get it in many forms—copper and silver, red and silver, gold and silver, gold and red, and so on. Some kinds have a red tassel covering the tail triangle. There is a Colorado flying-spoon which rotates on a bar instead of on a swivel, and that has served me well at times. It would, however, be well if further experiments were tried with spoons, and if a regular colour sequence were obtainable. One or two trials of green baits have convinced me that a green spoon would probably be useful in clear water, and a combination of brown and yellow ought also to be tried. Unlimited pains have been taken to test different colour schemes in salmon-flies, and I am sure similar work would be useful to the pike-fisher who prefers artificial baits.

Even with natural baits something of the kind might be done. I owe to Messrs. Farlow and Co. a dodge which has stood me in good stead more than once. It consists in adding red spots to a dead dace or gudgeon with a needle and red wool. Thread the wool through

the eye of the needle, and then run it through the side of the fish at some half-dozen points, cutting it off close to the fish, so that a little red spot shows on each side of him. It is rather a bother to do this, but it certainly pays now and then, and the idea is capable of extension, perhaps.

Of other artificial baits one can only say that most of them will kill fish at some time or other. I have done well with both Phantoms and Devons. The Wagtail is

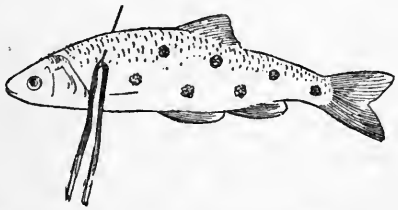

Fig. 41.—Dead Bait with Red Wool Spots.

a capital lure, which, by the way, very nearly slew the biggest pike I ever saw in the water. I hooked it myself on a live bait first, got a good view of it close in, and then lost it. About a week later a friend of mine hooked it again on a Wagtail, played it out, and then found that the gaff was on the other side of the lake. The keeper ran to fetch it, but meanwhile one of the flying-hooks of the bait caught in a stick or something, the pike gave a last plunge, and escaped for a second time. There has been no third time, and altogether it was a grievous affair. But the incident gave me a con-

siderable respect for the Wagtail. Perhaps, on the whole, artificial spinning-baits kill better in lakes than in rivers. A bright spoon is about the best thing to use when the water is thick, if Fate gives you thick water to spin in. The blend of copper and silver seems more visible in a flood than anything else.

There are plenty of artificial models of small fish which look very attractive, but I must confess that I have not tried them very much. They are expensive, and I have a careless habit of leaving baits on the bottom of a river. A careful angler would perhaps find them as good as they look.

Flights of hooks for dead baits are almost as varied as artificial baits. I am much of "Red Spinner's" opinion that it matters little which you use, so long as it makes the bait spin and has something sharp near the vent and the shoulder. Flights which give the bait a curve and spin it in that way are more to my liking than fan-flights, partly because I think the fans may get in the way during the hooking process; partly because a bait spinning on a curve can be drawn more slowly through the water. It does not find the bottom so easily as a bait spinning on fans, and that is rather important, because you want to spin as deep as you can.

The Archer Spinner, Hardy's Crocodile, and other fan-flights, are, however, used successfully by many skilful anglers. The smaller and slimmer the bait, the better it will revolve on them.

Of the Dee flight I have spoken. An excellent variation of it is made by Mr. J. W. Martin (22, Seymour Street, Euston, N.W.), who is, or ought to be, well known to anglers as "The Trent Otter." His flight, with its strip of zinc which passes through the bait, the two triangles at the vent, and the flying-triangle at the shoulder, is described and figured in his attractive book "Days among the Pike and Perch." I have used this tackle a good deal, and can recommend it. The strip of zinc which passes through the bait strengthens it greatly, and the triangle at the shoulder is decidedly helpful to the armature.

The latest improvement to the Dee flight I have only just discovered in the new edition of "Der Angelsport im Süsswasser," the valuable book of a famous German angler, Dr. Karl Heintz. It consists in the addition of a triangle to the ordinary mouth-lead used with this tackle. I have not yet tried it, but I am convinced that it should answer admirably, and shall certainly try it on the first opportunity I get. It is made by Wieland, Ottostrasse 3B, Munich. There are several ingenious tackles in Dr. Heintz's book which are not known in England, and which would, I think, repay a trial, from the look of them. Spinning for that splendid fish the huchen has quickened the inventive faculties of German anglers.

I don't know that I can say much more about spinning-tackle very usefully. Of single wire I sang the

praises before. It is to be lamented that so far single wire has not been found adaptable to flights of hooks, unless you build them with eyed triangles, which look rather clumsy. The best alternative is fine twisted mahseer wire, which can be got from the best tackle-makers. This can be bound securely to hooks, and can also be bound into a loop at the end; with single wire neither thing is possible, since the wire slips through the binding. Nor is it quite pliable enough for a hook-flight. But with single-wire traces and flights on fine twisted wire one is well enough prepared, and if it is necessary to fish very fine, the hook-link can be shortened until only the loop extends beyond the head of the bait. To this the loop-swivel is attached, and then there is only the fine single wire. The arrangement could hardly be more inconspicuous.

When it comes to tackle for live-bait fishing, the same principle can be applied: a single-wire trace and hooks on fine twisted wire—that is, for float-fishing. Float-fishing for pike is just like other float-fishing, only rather more so, to put it in Irish fashion. The float is bigger (as big as a hen's egg sometimes), there is more lead, and the hooks are generally a brace of specially made triangles of the Jardine or Bickerdyke pattern. The bait—a live dace, gudgeon, or roach—is put on with one hook just caught under the back fin, and the other in the corner of the gill-cover or at the root of the pectoral fin. You can see that the

"holding" hooks are distinct from the striking hooks. A pierced bullet or a barrel lead is slipped on to the trace when you are making it, and rests on the lower swivel.

You fix the depth so that the bait swims about 1 foot or 18 inches from the bottom, and when a pike seizes it, you let the float go under, count ten, and then strike. If the bait be a long way off—in some places men throw their tackle out 40 yards or more—the sinking of the line would prove an obstacle to effective striking. This is got over by the use of pilot-floats, little cork beads, of which a couple are strung on the line above the big float. When the bait is thrown out, these slip up the line and support it for some distance. Instead of using pilot-floats, you can grease the line with gishurstine or some other dry-fly ointment, which will keep it on the surface for a good long time.
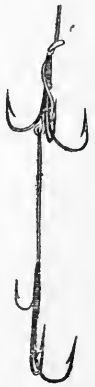
FIG. 42.—JARDINE LIVE-BAIT TACKLE.

Instead of the flight of hooks, you can use a large single hook, which is simply placed through the bait's upper lip. This is certainly more humane, and it keeps the bait alive longer. And I am not sure that it does not hook a pike just as well if you are canny. Use smaller baits and you need have no anxiety about the pike's getting the hook into its mouth. A small bait is

usually engulfed at once. A bigger one is seized across the middle, and often held for a long time before it is turned head-down for swallowing.

The single hook is certainly the thing for paternoster fishing. The style of the paternoster I described before in telling you about roach-fishing. For pike you want something stronger, of course. Four feet of salmon-gut make a good trace; a loop is made in it about 18 inches from the bottom, and the single hook on a short length of twisted wire, say 4 inches, is looped to that. The lead may weigh as much as 1 ounce in very strong streams, but usually a half-ounce lead is enough. A float is sometimes used with a paternoster, but not as a rule. Usually one fishes by feeling, keeping the line taut between the point of the rod and the lead. When a run is felt, line is given to the pike at once, and the counting process is gone through, as in float-fishing.

There are some places where live-baiting is practically essential to the capture of pike, but in ordinary rivers and lakes one can get all the sport one wants by spinning and trolling, which are far more sporting and interesting methods. In them the angler does the work, in live-baiting it is the bait that does it; there can be no question as to which alternative makes the greater appeal to ingenious minds. Where you must live-bait to do any good, as in shallow weedy lakes, remember that too big a float may put suspicion into the minds of the pike. For clear, shallow water a

large cork, with a hole through it and a plug made of a bit of stick, is better than a gaudy float. And small corks will make excellent pilots.

It occurs to me that in such waters it might be worth while trying a big salmon-fly, for preference a bushy thing that has some resemblance to a duckling, a moorhen, or a rat. You want a powerful salmon-rod to cast it with, because it ought to be at least 3 inches long. I cannot say that I have done any fishing of this kind, but I have caught so many small pike while fishing for something else with fly that I have no doubt one could catch big ones by setting out to do so. Tackle-makers sell a thing they call a "pike-fly," which is probably effective at times, but it is heavy, and has to be cast out like a spinning-bait.

The salmon-rod would also be a good thing for frog-fishing. A dead frog mounted on a big single hook like this would account for pike late in the season, when frogs are busy spawning. You would cast it like a fly, and work it in slow jerks at about mid-water. Here, again, is a thing I have never done, and here, again, an argument from chance occurrences. I have caught small pike with little frogs when I have been casting for chub, and I have caught other and larger pike later in the season which have been stuffed with larger frogs. The deduction is obvious.

Lastly, there are worms. Pike will take lobworms at times, but I do not recommend lobworms as a

standard bait, any more than plummets, paste, or potatoes, which pike will also take occasionally. Orthodox baits give us quite enough scope. . . .

I perceive you are asleep, and I suspect that you have been asleep for some time. Who am I to blame you, after all this prosing?

Here, wake up! Here's your candle. It's raining cats and dogs, and we shan't have any fishing to-morrow. Pleasant dreams

CHAPTER XIV

ODDS AND ENDS

This chapter is but a picking up of scattered threads. A book which has grown very gradually, being written as and when time could be found for it in a busy year, is sure to leave unsaid a good many things that should be said. The following final pages are an attempt to fill a few of the blanks which I have discovered on re-reading the proofs.

Perch and Minnows.

I find, for instance, that I have not done the perch justice. There should have been much more about him, and I ought to have been much more explicit as to the ways of catching him. This is more particularly true with regard to minnow-fishing, a subject on which I have only touched incidentally. Perch are, at times, very fond of minnows—in which term I include small fish of minnow size generally, because the minnow proper does not occur in all waters. I remember,

indeed, one lake on the shores of the Baltic where the larger perch preferred tiny members of their own species to anything else. In the Norfolk Broads, where minnows were not to be obtained, and on the lower Warwickshire Avon, where they were very scarce, I found that other small fish did just as well. Probably a gudgeon about 3 inches long is the best of all fish as a perch-bait.

You can use these baits either alive or dead—alive on paternoster or float tackle, or simply attached to a cast weighted with one or two split-shot, without a float or any other lead. This last method of fishing is often the most successful of the three, especially when the perch are somewhat shy. It much resembles the system of roving with a worm, which I have described before. Most people employ a single hook in live-baiting for perch, passing it through one or both of the bait's lips. Others have a miniature pike-tackle, consisting of a lip-hook and a very small triangle below it, which is caught into the base of the back fin. I think one hooks fish rather better with this, but I seldom bother about it.

There are times when perch will seize baits which are relatively enormous; I have known a ¾-pound fish swallow a 6-inch gudgeon, but usually a 3-inch bait is big enough: it is more likely to be taken properly. The bigger a bait is, the more inclined are perch to worry it without getting it properly into their mouths.

Where I can manage it, I prefer float-fishing or roving to paternostering. There is too much lead about the last tackle, and the fish are apt to feel too much resistance and to leave the bait after a tentative snap.

But if I am going to use minnows for perch at all, my favourite method is to use them dead on drop-minnow tackle. Drop-minnowing is exactly like snap-trolling, which has been described on an earlier page, except that the tackle is much finer and the hooks much smaller. It is a style of fishing much more practised in the North country by trout-fishers than in the South by any fishers. The tackle employed there is simply a big hook with lead on its shank, and the gut is threaded through the dead minnow from mouth to tail.

I am not sure whether this tackle might not be barred on waters like the Thames, where gorge-bait fishing is forbidden, though it is not necessary to wait for a perch to gorge the minnow before you strike him; if the hook is fairly large, you can strike as quickly as you would with a worm. To avoid possible contravention of rules and by-laws, however, it is safer to use a tackle like that shown on p. 268. For perch it is tied on reasonably fine gut, and should only have one small triangle. And the lead should be quite tiny, because the minnow ought not to flash through the water like a bullet, but to glide through it head first at a moderate pace. I consider that drop-minnowing is

peculiarly suitable to perch, because they are always much attracted by a bait which moves up and down, which is what a drop-minnow does.

Now and then perch will come with enthusiasm at a dead minnow on a spinning-flight, say a Dee flight, as already described, but I consider the drop-minnow more killing. Very big perch have occasionally been caught on pike-baits, both alive and spun, but I do not regard that as other than accidental. Pike-hooks are too much of a mouthful for perch as a general rule.

Catching Baits.

There are two chief ways of catching baits—with rod and with net. Pike-baits are easily caught in summer when you do not want them, with difficulty in winter when you do. Many club waters have what is called a "bait-box"—a big wooden box with small holes bored in its lid and sides. This is sunk in the stream or lake, and small fish will live in it for a long time if it is kept in clear, pure water. When baits are wanted in a hurry, a cast-net is the best thing to catch them with. This is an ingenious net, weighted with bullets at the bottom, which opens out like an umbrella when thrown over the water. It takes a lot of throwing, but a skilful netter will catch plenty of fish with it. An unskilful netter will get very wet in his efforts to use it.

Smaller baits, such as minnows, gudgeon, young dace, etc., can be caught in a drop-minnow net. This is a

small shallow net on a round frame. It is weighted in the middle, and suspended from a long pole by a cord. It is allowed to sink to the bottom in shallow water, and is pulled smartly out when some baits are seen to be swimming over it. With this implement you can soon get enough little fish when they are anywhere to be seen.

But the most amusing, though not the quickest, way of getting minnows is to catch them with a hook. You want the smallest hook you can get, say a No. 13 or 14 roach-hook, and a yard of thread or fine gut, which is tied to a withy-shoot about 4 feet long. One tiny split-shot is pinched on 6 inches from the hook, the bait is a fragment of worm no bigger than will just cover the hook, and you fish partly by sight, partly by touch. Let the bit of worm down among a shoal of minnows, and you will see them scrambling for it. Soon one more adroit than the rest will get it into his mouth and bolt with it. Strike when he is bolting, and he is yours. There is, however, some little knack in it, because a minnow soon lets the worm go, and the strike often has no result.

Minnows can be caught thus within a foot of the surface, but for gudgeon you have to fish on the bottom and use a rather bigger piece of worm. Where the water is clear, and not more than 3 or 4 feet deep, you can see what is happening in the same way, and it is not difficult to catch a few small gudgeon by sight.

You want rather more line, of course, and possibly a longer stick. If the water is deeper than that, it is better to use your rod and a float, letting your small worm just trip, or lie, on the bottom.

The Bait-Can.

Having caught your baits, you must, of course, have something to keep them in if you want them alive. If you only want to spin or troll with them, and that soon, it is best to kill them at once by flipping them on the head with a finger-nail, and to put them into a tin box half filled with bran, or to wrap them in a soft cloth. There are several kinds of bait-can, and of them all I like best the oval can which has an inner part of perforated zinc, which lifts out. This inner part can be sunk in the river at the end of a strong cord, and it keeps the baits quite well and lively. When you are carrying the can about, too, I think the perforated zinc helps to aerate the water as it splashes, and that is also to the good. For perch baits you only want quite a small can, say about 10 inches long, but for pike-fishing a bigger one is advisable.

The Keep-Net.

While on the subject of receptacles I had, perhaps, better mention this implement. I have never used it myself, so I can only speak of it theoretically. It is a sort of cage made of netting and wooden rings, with

an opening at the top. It is sunk in the water close to the angler's feet, and is used to keep his fish alive, so that he may return them subsequently without disturbing his swim. The idea is in many ways excellent, but I think that care should be taken not to have the net too full, otherwise the fish are likely to be injured, and they will then be liable to attacks of fungus. I have heard complaints of damage done in this way by keep-nets, but I do not think they can do harm if used with discretion. Certainly their use would tend to make anglers return many fish which they might otherwise kill, and that seems decidedly in their favour.

India-rubber.

I have mentioned the usefulness of a pouch made of india-rubber as a cast-damper, but I have forgotten to touch on the further usefulness of this material as a means of straightening gut. Whatever I am fishing for nowadays, I always have a piece of india-rubber about 4 inches square in my pocket. It is cut from an old tobacco-pouch, and if I want to straighten a dry cast I pull it through the doubled india-rubber, and the process has the desired effect. It is not, of course, desirable to let this straightening serve instead of soaking before actual fishing, but there are other occasions (when one is making up tackle, for instance) when it is useful to be able to straighten gut quickly. Up to a point, also, the application of india-rubber will

remedy fraying in gut, by removing some of the roughened surface. If a cast is somewhat frayed, but is intrinsically sound, this plan is a good one.

India-rubber has further uses for the angler. Umbrella-rings are invaluable things to have. They will serve as impromptu reel fastenings; they will keep the joints of a rod together if you want to carry it about without its case, and they come in handy in other ways. In heavy rain it is very useful to have one on the rod 1 foot or 18 inches above the reel; it will to a considerable extent prevent streams of water from trickling down the rod and getting into the sleeves. This is particularly useful in spinning and fly-fishing, when the hand which holds the rod is in constant motion and the point of the rod is often well up in the air.

Yet another virtue in india-rubber—fine tubing can be cut into the best possible float-caps, and a few inches of it will last a season. Fine india-rubber tubing perishes in course of time, so it is well to renew the small stock annually.

Casting-Reels.

I have spoken of the ordinary Nottingham reel, and the way in which a bait may be cast from it, but a few words on other casting-reels may be advisable, especially as the Nottingham reel is not suitable for casting baits of very small size and light weight.

There are, however, a good many reels on the market which will throw a light bait quite a long way, and the angler can easily get one if he does not mind paying for it.

One of the oldest of these reels is Coxon's Aerial, which is really a reel of the Nottingham type, of exceptionally light build. Its frame is not solid, but constructed on the skeleton principle, and its light weight makes for easy casting. The makers are Allcock and Co., Redditch, and it can be obtained through any tackle-maker.

Another reel of old establishment is the Malloch, the invention of Mr. P. D. Malloch, of Perth. Its feature lies in the principle by which its drum turns sideways, and line comes off it much as cotton would come off its reel if you held it sideways. The Malloch reel certainly will throw a very light bait if you use a fine enough line, and if you have to fish a water which is much overhung with trees or other obstacles, I think it is the best reel I know for the purpose, as it requires so little swing of the rod. Its chief disadvantage is that the method of pulling line off puts a kink in it. That is to some extent neutralized in the latest pattern of the reel by a reversible drum, which enables you to turn the reel round after you have been fishing some time and pull line off from the opposite side. This reverses the kink naturally. But I think Northern anglers, who mostly use the Malloch reel, rather depend on having

a new line pretty often than on trying to undo the kink. They use light undressed lines which are not expensive.

The Illingworth reel is an ingenious thing which will also throw a very light bait. The line comes off a bobbin sideways, as off the drum of the Malloch, and to a *careful* angler I should say the reel would be a valued possession. But it takes a lot of learning, is expensive, and requires a very thin and fragile line.

The Silex of Messrs. Hardy Bros., Ltd., Alnwick, is quite one of the best casting-reels on the market, and in one of the smaller sizes will do for quite light baits. The makers issue a booklet which will show its character and the way of using it. The latest pattern has a brake which can be applied by a finger or thumb, and which regulates the passage of the bait to a nicety.

The Crosslé and Marston-Crosslé reels are good—the former, a little aluminium reel, being the better for very light baits. These reels can be regulated to the weight of a bait, so that they will not overrun, by a screw-nut at the side; but personally I prefer to use the Crosslé as an ordinary Nottingham, and find that it is very pleasant to fish with. The Marston-Crosslé is an excellent pike-reel. I find both these reels improved by a Bickerdyke line-guard, which can easily be attached to them.

A pretty little reel for light baits has lately been invented by Farlow and Co., 10, Charles Street, St.

James's Square. This is called the "Billiken," and it is a little aluminium multiplying-reel, to which is fitted an ingenious air-brake worked by a pair of fans at the side. As the reel increases in momentum during the passage of the bait, so do the fans offer increased resistance to the air and bring the brake into operation. The reel seems a little complicated at first, but one soon gets used to its adjustment. It deserves special notice because, so far as I know, it is the only recent English attempt to compete with Americans in their special field of multiplying casting-reels for very light baits.

Casting a Fly.

I find that I have said little or nothing on this subject, and candidly I wish that I had not made the discovery, because to attempt written instructions seems to me a forlorn affair.

If one must try to give advice to a beginner, the best is: "Get a friend to show you how it is done." If, however, a man is in such melancholy case that he has no fly-fishing friends, I suppose he can to some extent pick up the knack of casting for himself. I did as a boy, but I remember that it was a long and arduous matter. Nor did I make much progress at it until more or less by accident I began to use rather a heavy line—heavy, that is, in comparison to the lines with which I had made a beginning.

The secret of learning to cast a fly lies in getting a

balance of rod and line. If you have a line which is heavy enough for the rod, the fly will almost cast itself. If your line is too light for the rod, the hand must do a great deal of the work, and that is where the beginner finds trouble. In Chapter II. I have indicated a tapered 30-yard line, weighing 1 ounce or a little less, as suitable for a moderately powerful split-cane rod of 10 feet 3 inches; and with such a combination casting will be found as easy as it can be made.

What the beginner has to get into his head is, that the line is a weight which has to be propelled in a certain direction, and that the rod is the elastic agent by which this is done. Let him begin by pulling 8 or 10 yards of line beyond the top ring, stretching it out on the grass in front of him, and then trying to lift it into the air behind him by a quick upward movement of the rod, whose top at the beginning should be about 5 feet from the ground in front of him, and at the end should be straight up in the air over his shoulder. He will find that the rod bends to the weight of the line, picks it up off the grass, and swings it right up into the air behind him. After he has practised this a few times, he can try the double movement of swinging it up from the grass and then swinging it forward from the air.

The principle is exactly the same in both cases—the rod obeys the weight of the line—but, of course, when the line is in the air the rod has to move at a given

moment or the line will fall down. Also, at the second movement the rod-point is straight up and not near the ground as in the first movement. The difficulty at first is to make sure of the moment at which to swing the line forward again—to "time" the cast, as it is called; but this can at first be got over automatically by waiting for a moment after the rod is at the vertical, and then swinging it forward to its former position with the top 5 feet from the ground. If the timing has been correct, the line will swing forward and fall straight out on the grass. If the caster has swung too soon, it will come forward in a heap; if too late, he will find that it has reached the grass behind. By committing a few mistakes of both kinds he will gradually realize how long a time ought to elapse before he begins the forward swing.

An important point in learning to use a fly-rod is not to be afraid of bending it. A fly-rod is meant to bend; and though it looks fragile, ordinary casting will not break it, however much force you use. The novice, anxious on this point, is prone to wave his rod very gently, trusting that the line will, as it were, float out in front of him. It may do so in a strong wind, but not otherwise. In ordinary circumstances the line will not go out at all unless the rod *makes* it do so, and the rod will not perform this function unless it bends to the line's weight, and has enough power in the sweep to transfer that weight from one place to another.

Power must not be confused with violence, which does not help matters at all, but rather makes for failure.

Once the principle of getting a short line out somehow has been grasped, it becomes a fairly easy matter to increase the length of line. The action is exactly the same, but, of course, more time has to be allowed for the line to extend itself behind the rod. Ascertaining the exact moment at which to begin the forward cast is the chief difficulty to be overcome. The moment *is* exact, and if you are too late the fly will have touched the ground, and perhaps caught up in something; if you are too soon, you will hear a crack in the air, and possibly find that the fly has departed. I used to think that the moment was when the line was straight out in the air behind, and, indeed, I have said so in print, but it seems that I was wrong. The exact moment comes *before* the line is straight. But it comes when all the weight is far enough back to react on the rod, and if the novice waits until he *thinks* the line is straight he will be all right The thought will come to him before the thing has really happened. With a big fly, like a salmon-fly, I believe one gets much nearer to the straight line behind than with small flies.

I have said something about "shooting" line on an earlier page, so I will not enlarge upon the plan here, except to say that the device ought to be learnt, because it is invaluable in any sort of fly-fishing. It saves the

rod, makes long casting much easier, and also causes the fly to fall very nicely.

With regard to the falling of the fly, stress is often laid on the need for lightness, and with this in mind the novice is apt to stick forlornly to his waving, floating-out tactics; if rod and line are gentle, he thinks, the fly will come gently to its destination. This is a mistake—the fly will not get there at all. To make a fly alight softly you must aim it at a spot rather above the water. It will get there and then drop, and in dropping will acquire the needed thistledown characteristics, thanks to the resisting air. Regulating the aim is done by keeping the point of the rod fairly well up at the end of the forward sweep.

A habit of doing this comes in very useful when the fly-fisher finds that he has to cast into the teeth of the wind, for by altering his system and bringing the rod-point right down till it almost touches the water he finds that he can get the better of the wind and put his fly out in spite of it. Ordinarily this is a mere prolongation of the forward sweep, and is done slowly and steadily; but if the wind is bad it may be necessary to quicken a little towards the end, thus executing the manœuvre known as the downward cut.

For dry fly-fishing it is necessary to acquire the knack of making false casts in the air, which is not difficult once you can make ordinary casts. And for all fishing it is most useful to be able to make both underhand

and back-handed (or left-handed) casts. Underhand casts are exactly like ordinary casts, save that the rod moves almost parallel with the ground instead of high in the air. The switch-cast is also very useful at times, but it cannot be taught on paper. It consists in getting the line out without letting the fly go behind you at all. The best teacher is a strong wind at your back. If, in such a wind, you raise the rod, lift as much line as you can out of the water, and then make a forward sweep, you will find that the wind gets hold of the line, rolls it out, and miraculously places the fly straight at the end of it. It is possible for you to do the same thing all by yourself without any wind, for the rod properly used will supply the needed motive power. The wind taught me the switch-cast, so I presume it could teach others no less.

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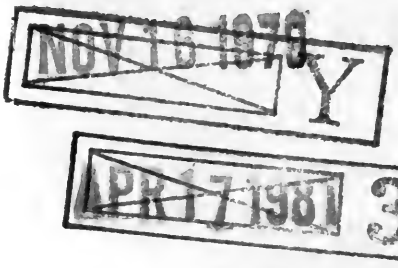

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